

*Salt of the South*  
*The LDS Trail Blazers*





# Salt of the South

## The LDS Trail Blazers

LaViece Moore-Fraser Smallwood



R/011 97



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**FRONT BOOK COVER**

**TOP RIGHT:**

1890's GEORGE PAUL CANOVA HOME IN  
SANDERSON, FL.  
DALINE CANOVA CHACE

**TOP LEFT:**

AMES R. BOONE  
JACKSONVILLE EAST STAKE HOUSE

**SECOND ROW:**

LAUDE & SHORT STREETS CHAPEL 1905  
ARK & COPELAND STREETS CHAPEL 1925  
ELLIE HILL MADDOCK FIRST WOMAN  
MISSIONARY FROM JACKSONVILLE

**THIRD ROW:**

ANDERSON CHURCH 1929  
SAN MATTEO CHAPEL DEDICATED  
MARCH 4, 1928  
AMES RICHARD DAVID BATEY  
FLEMING TERRELL (KNOWN AS PICKY-PA)  
FIRST CHURCH AT OAK GROVE NEAR  
PROVIDENCE, FLORIDA EARLY 1900's

**BOTTOM ROW:**

PICTURING GEORGE PAUL CANOVA IN CARRIAGE  
THADDEUS HILL MOVING TREE BLOCKING  
ROAD  
ASSASSIN WHO SHOT & KILLED  
GEORGE P. CANOVA JUNE 5, 1898

**BACK BOOK COVER:**

ENTER COUPLE, ALZADA BEASLEY &  
ALVIN CANOVA CHACE  
BEGINNING TOP LEFT, THEN CLOCKWISE  
VIRGINIA DERBYSHIRE &  
WILFORD WATTS JORDAN  
HANNA GREENE & GEORGE PAUL CANOVA  
EMMA KERCE & JOHN JACKSON  
BLACKWELDER  
MALINE MACONSON & PERRY VOYLES  
VELYN MARY SOLANA &  
WILLIAM FRITCHIFF TILTON  
MARGARET GREENE & THADDEUS HILL





VIRGINIA DERBYSHIRE &  
WILFORD WATT'S JORDAN



DIANNA GREENE &  
GEORGE PAUL CANOVA



MARGARET GREENE &  
THADDEUS HILL



ALZADA BEASLEY &  
ALVIN CANOVA CHACE



EMMA KERCE &  
JOHN JACKSON BLACKWELDER

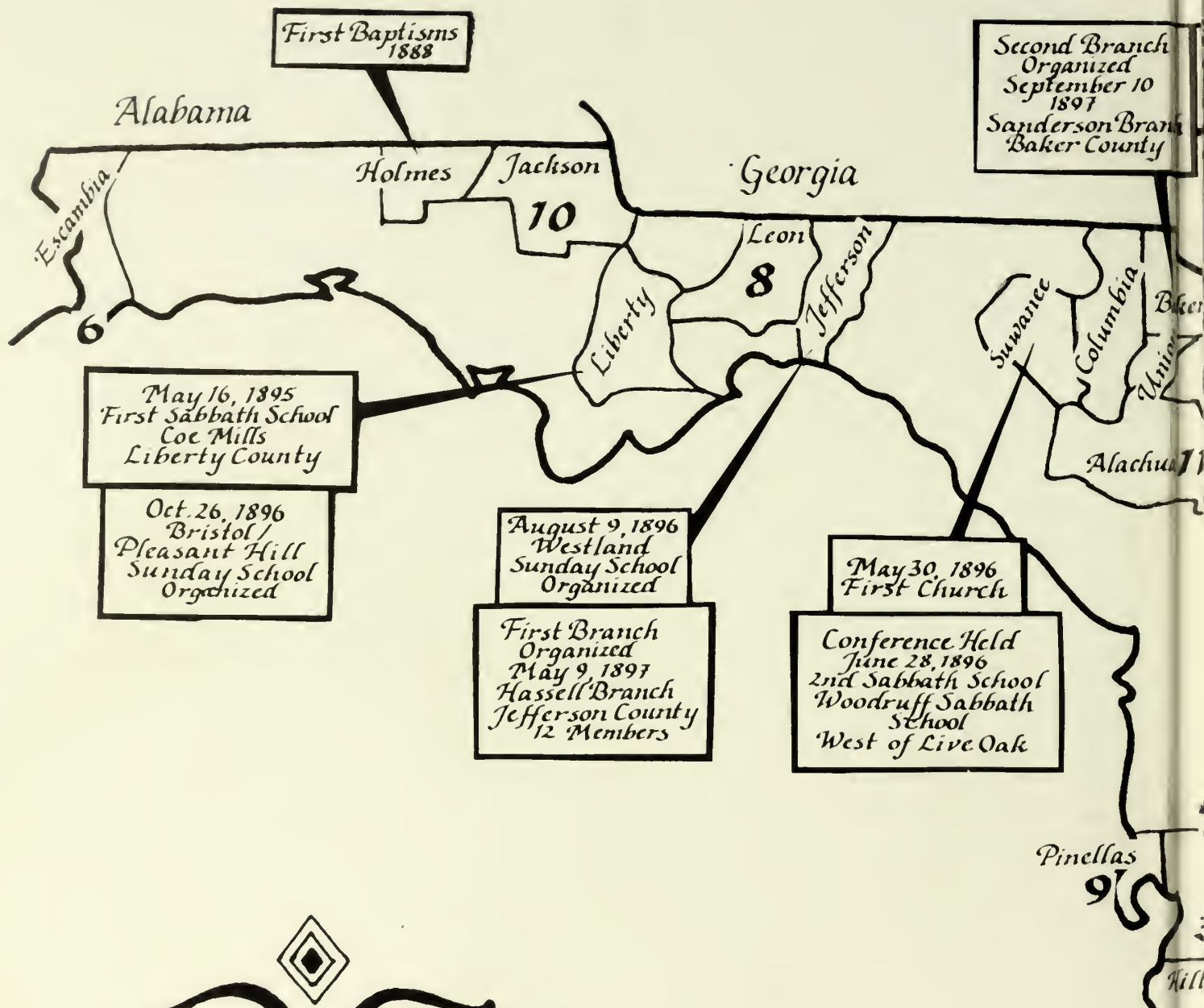


EVELYN MARY SOLANA &  
WILLIAM FRITCHIFF TILTON



EMALINE MACCONSON &  
PERRY VOYLES





LDs  
Legacy  
in  
Florida

April 24 ~ June 19  
1845  
Phineas Young  
Distributes Copies  
of The Book of  
Mormon to the  
Indians in Florida

Anderson  
Sunday School  
Organized  
July 6, 1897



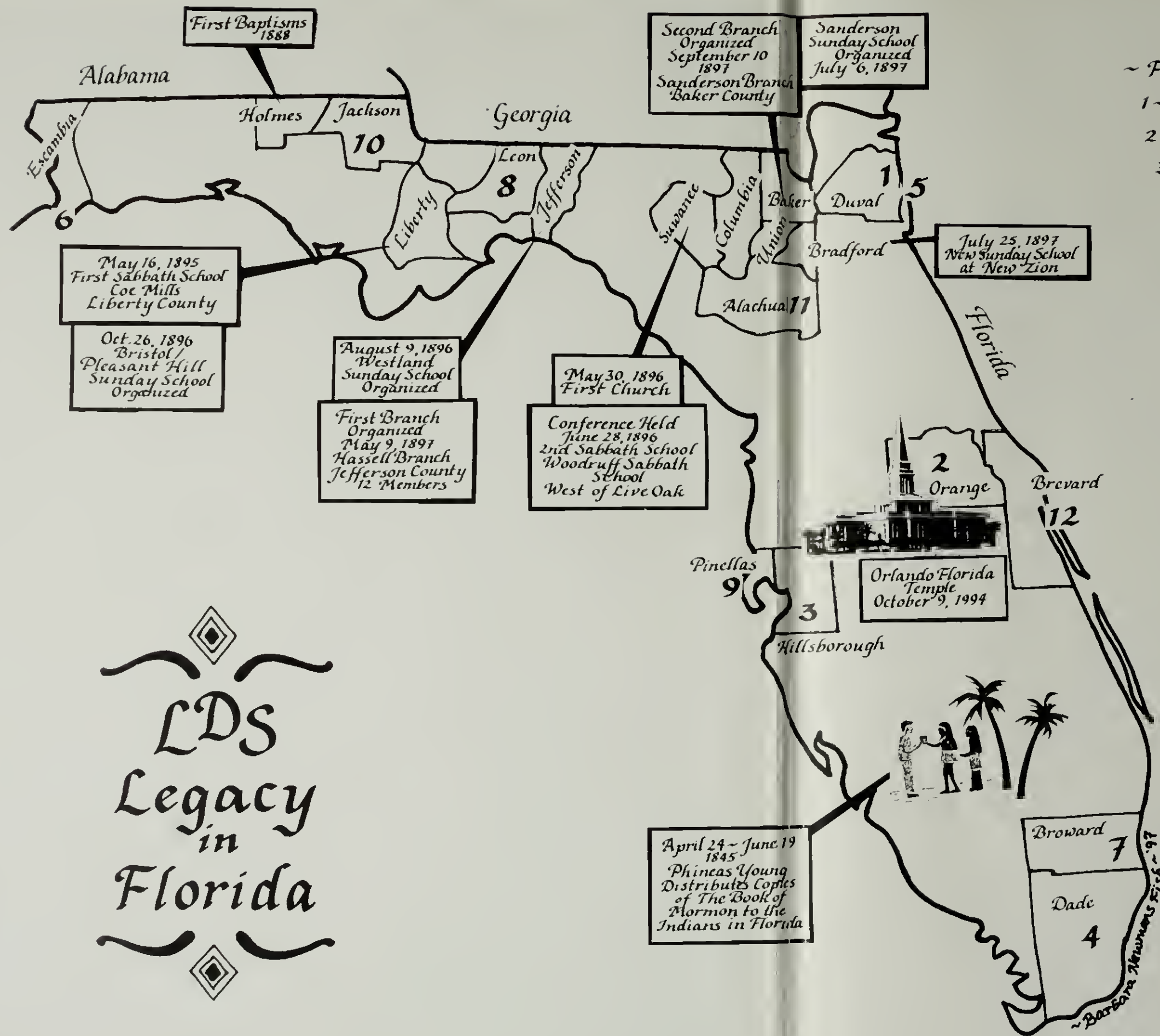
~ First Twelve Stakes In Florida ~

- 1 ~ Florida Stake ~ in Jacksonville ~ 1941
- 2 ~ Orlando ~ 1958
- 3 ~ Tampa ~ 1959
- 4 ~ Miami ~ 1960
- 5 ~ Jacksonville East Stake ~ 1968
- 6 ~ Pensacola ~ 1969
- 7 ~ Ft. Lauderdale ~ 1970
- 8 ~ Tallahassee ~ 1973
- 9 ~ St. Petersburg ~ 1974
- 10 ~ Marianna ~ 1975
- 11 ~ Gainesville ~ 1976
- 12 ~ Cocoa ~ 1977

God bless all the  
wonderful missionaries  
but especially those  
who have served us  
in the South

LuViece  
Smallwood  
1997





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  - 2 ~ Orlando ~ 1958
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# FOREWORD



## IN SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF GLYNDAL MUSSO-KEMP

Ocala, Florida  
1927-1987

Who planted the seed of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ deep in my heart through her great faith, testimony and example and for the countless missionaries, especially Elders Alan Gardner of St. George Utah, Virgile Alan LeSueur of Eagar Az., Kim Slater of Slatersville, Utah, Jeff Dullum of Portland, Oregon, and Stuart B. Cannon of Salt Lake City who faithfully trekked to our door to finally reap the harvest. Ims

In the scriptures it is recorded how the Savior taught the plan of planting the gospel in the hearts of each individual:

“Behold, a sower went forth to sow;  
And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side,  
and the fowls came and devoured them up:  
Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth:  
and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:  
And when the sun was up, they were scorched;  
and because they had no root they withered away.  
And some fell among thorns;  
and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:  
But other fell into good ground and brought forth fruit,  
some an hundredfold, some sixty fold, some thirtyfold.”

Matt. 13:3-8

In the South sowers went forth to sow; and when they sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up; Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty fold, some thirtyfold.

May we be true to their memory:

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him:  
Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught,  
abounding therein with thanksgiving.”

Col 2:6-7

This book is dedicated to those whose good ground in the South brought forth good fruit. Those tillers of the earth who were faithful and dedicated to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“His judgments are just; that He is just in all His works,  
and that He is merciful unto the children of men,  
and that He has all power to save every man that believeth on His name  
and bringeth forth fruit meet for repentance.”

Alma 12: 14-15

## AUTHOR/COMPILER

La Viece Moore-Fraser Smallwood is a native of Baker County, Florida. She and her family were taught the gospel by missionaries and baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Wilford Watts Jordan in Jacksonville, Florida on June 10, 1969. Her great aunts, Margaret Greene (Thaddeus) Hill and Dianah Greene (George) Canova joined the Church in Sanderson, Baker County, Florida in 1897. Her great grandfather, Brantly Harrison Fraser was baptized a member of the Church in Baker County on May 18, 1913.

La Viece has combined her love for people, history and genealogy in a series of oral interview books titled, *'Once Upon a Lifetime in Baker County, Florida'*. She also has published volume one of *Baker's Dozen*, featuring the lifestyle of early Baker County pioneers.

For 17 years she wrote a popular weekly column, 'Out on a Limb: The Family Tree,' as well as feature articles, for *The Florida Times-Union* newspaper in Jacksonville, Florida. The column, and other related articles, also appeared in newspapers and genealogical publications throughout the United States. She was the first genealogical columnist in the nation to receive an award of merit from the National Genealogical Society.

In 1982 she was listed among the Prominent and Professional Women of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She was the first Floridian to be presented the Martha Washington Award and appears in the 1st and 2nd Edition of *Who's Who in American Genealogy*. She has served in various ward and stake callings including Ward Relief Society President, MIA President, Area and Region Public Relations Director and has been a correspondent for the LDS worldwide *Church News* publication.

La Viece is married to Z. Vincent Smallwood, President of the Lake City Florida Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He is a retired Major with the Florida Highway Patrol. The couple has three children, Zackary V. (Shirley) Smallwood, Jr., Tamara Sue (Eric) Ellison and Teri Elizabeth (Joel) Looper. Their 13 grandchildren are: Tabitha, Zackary III, Shannon, Jeffrey (deceased), Ashlynn La Viece, Cassidy Smallwood, Ryan, Bree, Taylor, Haley Ellison, Kayla, Rand, and Troy Looper.



La Viece Moore-Fraser Smallwood

## BOOK COVER ART



Ronald A. Vonk

Ronald A. Vonk was born and reared in the shadow of the Salt Lake Temple. From 1961 to 1964, he served a mission for the Church in the Netherlands. He graduated from Brigham Young University in 1968 with a double degree in Fine Art and Commercial Art, with a minor in education. While a student at BYU he met Juana Chace of Jacksonville, Florida, the oldest daughter of President Alvin Canova and Alzada Beasley Chace. The couple married in the Salt Lake Temple in 1967 and moved to Jacksonville in 1968. He has served in a variety of stake and ward callings including bishop of the Jacksonville Ward located on the corner of Park and Copeland streets in the early 1970s. Ron and his family are currently living in Glen St. Mary, Florida where he is an intermediate school principal for the Baker County School District.

He and Juana are the parents of six children and an adopted niece and nephew. The couple has one grandson.

He presently serves as bishop of the Macclenny Ward.

## ***PROOF READER***

**Sabina James Murray** was born in Homerville, Georgia. She moved with her family to Madison, Florida and later to Jacksonville, Florida. By the age of 12 she had developed an unquenchable love of genealogy and history which she has faithfully pursued with a supportive family. She was married to Edward H. Murray, Jr. for 37 years before his death in 1991. The couple have four children and nine grandchildren.

Sabina graduated from the University of North Florida in 1974 with a degree in Elementary Education. For 17 years she taught 6th grade at Pine Forest School in Jacksonville. Since 1991 she has taught the 6th grade at duPont Middle School.

For more than 25 years she served in the Jacksonville, Florida LDS Church Family History Center. Five of those years she served as director. Presently she works with Church members as a Family History Consultant.

In 1990 she became an accredited genealogist with the Family History Library in Salt Lake City.

Sister Murray teaches genealogy classes with the Community School program in Jacksonville and participates in workshops sponsored by area genealogical and historical societies. Two of her classes, Tombstone Rubbings and How to Read Old Handwriting can be found on the Internet in a site called Treasure Maps. The latter won a Golden Web Award in 1996.



**Sabina James Murray**

## ***PUBLISHER***

**Alberta Canova Drummond Jolly** is a native of Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida. She descends from one of the oldest and most illustrious families in LDS Church history. Her father, Albert, was one of nine sons born to George Paul and Dianna Greene Canova in Sanderson, Florida on May 6, 1885. Her paternal grandparents were converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1897. The following year, her grandfather, George Paul Canova, was ambushed and murdered after a stern warning from a "committee of eight" to stop feeding and befriending the Mormon missionaries in Baker County.

In 1939 she and her husband, John Samuel Drummond, founded Drummond Press, first located on Clay Street in Jacksonville. Later the business was permanently moved to 2472 Dennis Street where it has expanded through the years to become one of the leading and most acclaimed printing companies in the South. Alberta and John are the parents of two children. Their daughter, Diane, is Vice President of Drummond Press and son John is a Jacksonville physician. They are the grandparents of six: Robert J. and John J. Falconetti and Christopher, Sarah, Jennifer and Mary Drummond. Alberta married M.C. Jolly after John's death.



“BEHOLD, I WILL SEND YOU ELIJAH THE PROPHET BEFORE THE  
COMING OF THE GREAT AND DREADFUL DAY OF THE LORD;

AND HE SHALL TURN THE HEART OF THE FATHERS TO THE  
CHILDREN, AND THE HEART OF THE CHILDREN TO THEIR  
FATHERS, LEST I COME AND SMITE  
THE EARTH WITH A CURSE.”

MALACHI 4: 5,6

“BEHOLD, THE TIME HAS FULLY COME, WHICH WAS SPOKEN  
OF BY THE MOUTH OF MALACHI—TESTIFYING THAT HE  
(ELIJAH) SHOULD BE SENT, BEFORE THE GREAT AND  
DREADFUL DAY OF THE LORD COME—

TO ‘TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS TO THE CHILDREN  
AND THE CHILDREN TO THE FATHERS, LEST THE WHOLE  
EARTH BE SMITTEN WITH A CURSE—

THEREFORE, THE ‘KEYS OF THIS DISPENSATION ARE  
COMMITTED INTO YOUR HANDS; AND BY THIS YE MAY KNOW  
THAT THE GREAT AND DREADFUL DAY OF THE LORD IS NEAR,  
EVEN AT THE DOORS.”

D&C 110: 14,15,16



# INTRODUCTION

On January 28, 1996, President Thomas S. Monson conducted a regional meeting of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Jacksonville, Florida. During the course of his address, he referred to the southern members of the Church as Salt of the South.

What a nice title for a book, I thought!

In the early morning hours of February 10th, I was awakened with a startling impression that I should compile a book of oral interviews titled *Salt of the South: The Trailblazers* (the stories of those persons who joined the Church before it became a stake on January 19, 1947).

When daylight arrived I began enthusiastically phoning friends that I knew had pioneer ancestry in the Church. I asked each of them if they would be willing to send me their family and personal histories for inclusion in such a publication. I gave a three month deadline. From the response of those I phoned I thought, "This will be quick and easy."

As the days passed into weeks, the mailbox remained empty. Then one day in March, just as I was beginning to feel uneasiness, I received a letter from a pioneer Saint whose name I had often heard, but whom I had never met. Vella Valentine (Mrs. Woody) Tilton wrote me in part: "I am so delighted to know of your book project. I have been gathering information and pictures for a similar book only on a smaller scale. I will be glad to share what I have with you."

From that moment on my faith increased. Letters followed from Lawrence Maddock in Panama City, author of the *Door of Memory*, an account of his Green-Hill pioneer lineage from Sanderson. His mother, Ella Gertrude Roberts Hill, was the first woman to serve as a missionary from Jacksonville. A huge package of oral interviews of early southern pioneer Saints arrived from David Boone, son of legendary James R. Boone, whose contributions to the Church's growth in the South is phenomenal. In the early 1980's, David interviewed these wonderful people through a grant made possible by the James R. Moyle foundation at Brigham Young University where he is presently employed as a Professor of church history. (The church copyright department granted me all rights to use the material).

Camilus 'Mickey' Brooks and her devoted husband, Reginald Hayes McRae, visited my home and brought along their memories of the old Third Ward in Jacksonville and her mother's book, "A Dream Fulfilled," that contained her pioneer family's early conversion story.

Stanley Clyde Johnson, who lives in Newberry in the Gainesville Stake, met me in Palatka at the home of Vella Tilton. He brought with him a voluminous record collection of the Church's growth in the South. He generously offered me use of the records he has been gathering for decades.

Vella's daughter, Vicki Urry of Salt Lake City, spent endless hours mulling over the the early Church records in the Salt Lake City Historical Department. She used a cassette recorder and I was able to transcribe her work.

In addition, Alzada Beasley Chace, widow of the South's first stake president, Alvin C. Chace, loaned me his journals, diaries and personal record collection.

Viola Canova Clark of Saint George, Utah, mailed me a cassette tape that her father, the late Thomas R. Canova, had recorded detailing his witness to the aftermath of the murder of his father, George Paul Canova, who had been forewarned and threatened for feeding and befriending the travelling Mormon missionaries in Sanderson.

David McPhail, formally of Jacksonville and now living in Salt Lake City, generously shared his southern record collection with me and continued his counsel and advice during the book's growth into publication.

Others, too numerous to mention, have responded in various ways that assisted me in putting together this book. Hundreds of photographs arrived as well as pioneer histories. It soon became apparent that the contents of the book would require much editing.

After two attempts to secure an editor for the book failed, causing a five months delay into publishing, my long time friend, Sabina James Murray of Jacksonville East Stake, came to my rescue. Despite her hectic schedule as a sixth grade elementary teacher, she proofread the material and readied it for publication in a little more than a month. She is truly an example of 'magnifying a calling'. Her love for the Church, and her dedication to its people overcame the countless obstacles and countdown time frame she was confronted with during the short period she worked on the material. In addition she was faced with the difficulty of learning to operate a computer for the first time which created many countless frustrating and time consuming hours. We both are grateful to her son-in-

law, David J. Knisley of Atlanta, a computer expert, who received many past midnight phone calls pleading for help. Without Sabina's assistance this work would have been delayed many many more months. I will be eternally grateful to Sabina for her willingness to assist in this labor. In order to publish the book in time for the Sesquicentennial World Wide Celebration in July, I took the book to the publisher with limited layout, design and editing. To complicate the publisher's woes, the IBM program originally used was not compatible with the publishers Macintosh system. The entire book had to be manually retyped, causing flow disorders and misspelled words. That is where master typesetter and designer Erik Mayo of Drummond Press entered the picture. Pushing minutes into a tight publishing schedule Erik diligently sought to accomplish the impossible, and he did it. His unlimited patience and dedication, support and expertise are worth more than mere words can express. We hope you will be tolerant for any typographical errors we were unable to detect before publication.

Mrs. Alberta Drummond, a descendent of the Canova family and owner of Drummond Press in Jacksonville, has graciously agreed to pick up all the pieces of our efforts and put them together during publication. Despite ill health and many complications, she has been gracious and helpful, kind and patient.

I have continually felt the ever present Spirit of my Father in Heaven's guidance and assistance. It is to Him belongs any praise and glory for any accomplishment that may come to this work.

I sincerely hope that all those who have assisted in this work will be able to realize the intensity and depth of my gratitude. I know the Savior is pleased with their support and willingness to help, and I believe they will be blessed eternally for helping to bring forth these priceless records that will continue throughout time eternal to honor the trailblazers, who were the Salt of the South Saints.

There will be errors in this work for alas we are all human. Many records, from various sources, already contradict the other. All who have contributed to this labor have worked hard to distinguish fact from fiction, and to have the least errors as possible. I ask your forbearance.

As I have gathered the records, I have grown even more grateful for those in my Greene, Hill, Canova, Roberts and Fraser families who accepted the gospel in the beginning of the Church's movement in the South. To them I owe much more than I can ever pay back, and I express my love and gratitude for their courage, determination, firm resolve and faith in every footstep.....!

La Viece Moore-Fraser Smallwood  
1997

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "La Viece", followed by a long, sweeping horizontal flourish that extends to the right.

# .....AND THE STONE ROLLED FORTH

By Sabina James Murray  
Jacksonville Florida East Stake

In the beginning...in the 1890's  
The missionaries came to teach the Truth.  
They came to Georgia,  
They came to Florida.  
Two by two they searched for the Blood of Israel.  
As they walked, they rolled the Stone that was cut out of the mountains without hands.  
They held meetings...  
    Street meetings,  
    Cottage meetings,  
    Branch meetings,  
    District meetings,  
And the people believed the Truth.  
One by one and two by two the people joined,  
And they grew strong,  
And they built churches...small churches  
In Waycross and Axson (called Little Utah) in Georgia,  
Sanderson and Lake City in Florida,  
Short Street and Springfield in Jacksonville.  
And the people believed....and they grew,  
And the Stone rolled forth.

But not everyone believed.  
Some men threatened these Saints,  
Some were called names,  
Some were beat and turned out,  
Some were even killed!  
But they were strong and they grew.  
In 1926 they built a chapel....a big chapel....on Park Street...in Jacksonville.  
And the people believed,  
And the Church grew.  
They held meetings....lots of meetings,  
    Priesthood meetings,  
    Primary meetings,  
    Mutual Improvement Association meetings,  
    Relief Society meetings,  
    Sunday School meetings, and  
    Sacrament meetings,  
And they grew....and the Stone rolled forth.

In 1947 they made a Stake....a Stake of Zion....in Florida....Jacksonville,  
The very first Stake in the South,  
Organized by Elders Charles A. Callis and Harold B. Lee, Apostles,  
They called Alvin C. Chace, President.  
It stretched .....from Jacksonville to Waycross and Axson, Georgia,  
    from Jacksonville to Lake City, Florida,  
    from Jacksonville to Gainesville, Florida,  
    from Jacksonville to Palatka, Florida,  
    from Jacksonville to St. Augustine, Florida.  
And they held meetings,  
And when they held meetings, they came from miles around,  
And they grew....and the Stone rolled forth.

And they had fun....they danced.



They had Gold and Green Balls with ....

Grand Marches,

Young Ladies' Presentations,

Special Dances.

And because so many came,

They held dances at the Riverside Women's Club, the Jewish Center,  
and the Friday Musicale.

And every Ward had a Ball,

And they came to every one,

From Waycross, Georgia, to Lake City, Florida, to Jacksonville,

They came from miles around because they had so much fun.

And they had 'dinner on the ground' after Ward Conferences,

They had Speech Festivals and Road Shows with Plays and Blackouts.

They had Ball Games and Tournaments.

They had Relief Society Bazaars....every Fall.

And they came from miles around because they had so much fun.

And they grew .....and the Stone rolled forth.

And they held meetings.....lots of meetings,

And the people believed and they grew.

They held Stake Conference every quarter.....four times a year,

And they heard Apostles and Prophets and General

Authorities.....every time.

And the people came from miles around....because they believed.

And because there were so many,

They met at the Riverside Woman's Club or the George Washington Hotel,

From ten until twelve in the morning,

And from two until four in the afternoon....on Sunday,

And the people believed and grew strong....

And the Stone rolled forth.

And the people had dinners.....lots of dinners,

Ward dinners,

Budget dinners,

Stake dinners,

And they raised money.....they needed a Stake House.

They worked and they toiled and they prayed.

In 1956 it was finished....dedicated by President David O. McKay.

And they came from miles around,

So many the Church could not hold them,

They listened from outside the building,

And they believed, and they grew strong....

And the Stone rolled forth.

They felt the Spirit of Elijah,

And they did genealogy.

They sent names in to the Temple...their ancestors,

Who were taught the Gospel in the Spirit World.

And they had a library....a genealogy library,

First at the home of the Rochesters....then at the Stake House,

Library number eight in all the Church,

And the people came from miles around and they grew.

And because they grew, they divided.

In 1968 they became two Stakes....Jacksonville and Florida,

And they grew stronger and baptized many,

And the Stone rolled forth....



They sent in names to the Temple....many names....to Salt Lake City,  
And then the Word came,  
They would have a Temple....their very own Temple,  
Washington Temple....one day away instead of three...only sixteen hours.  
In 1974 the people rejoiced at the Dedication,  
And the people came from miles around to the Temple.  
And they sent in names and went to the Temple.  
By car and by bus and by train and by plane.  
And they grew stronger and they baptized many.  
And the Stone rolled forth....

And again the Word came,  
They would have a Temple....their very own Temple,  
Atlanta Temple....six hours away instead of sixteen.  
In 1983 the people rejoiced at the Dedication,  
And the people came from miles around to the Temple  
And they grew stronger and baptized many,  
And because there were many, they had become many Stakes,  
In 1974....Jacksonville Florida East and West,  
In 1975....Douglas Georgia,  
In 1976....Gainesville Florida,  
In 1986....Lake City Florida,  
In 1987....Jacksonville Florida North,  
And the Stone rolled forth.

The people sent in names and went to the Temple,  
They grew stronger and baptized many.  
Once again the Word came,  
They would have a Temple....their very own Temple,  
Orlando Temple....three hours away instead of six.  
In 1994 the people rejoiced at the Dedication,  
And they came from miles around because they believed.  
And the people rolled the Stone,  
They rolled the Stone that was cut out of the mountains without hands,  
And they rolled it forth to fill the whole Earth.



Sabina based the theme of this poem on one of \* President Alvin Canova Chace's most famous sermons that pertained to King Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the interpretation by the Prophet Daniel.

“ We would all listen intently as President Chace raised his voice from the pulpit to prophesy how the gospel would roll forth in the world just as the stone rolled forth as it was cut out of the mountains without hands,” she said. See: Daniel 2:34, 45 and D&C 65:2

*\*Alvin C. Chace was called to be the first stake president in the South: Florida Stake, organized on January 19, 1947.*



*Beloved Prophet Gordon B. Hinckley*

# FLORIDA CHURCH HISTORY

## TIME LINE

*It should be considered that a few of the varying records used to compile this Time Line stated conflicting dates, times and places. Much effort has been given to determine the most reliable sources. Most spelling has been left as found in the records. It is hoped that this effort will assist you in your research, and your desire to know more about the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the South.*

FCR	FLORIDA CONFERENCE RECORDS
FCMH	FLORIDA CONFERENCE MANUSCRIPT HISTORY
SSMR	SOUTHERN STATES MISSION RECORDS
SSMI	SOUTHERN STATES MISSION INDEX
FCMB	FLORIDA CONFERENCE MINUTE BOOK
MHFC	MISSION HISTORY FLORIDA CONFERENCE
MMH	MISSION MANUSCRIPT HISTORY
MHI	MISSION HISTORY INDEX
SSMI	SOUTHERN STATES MISSION INDEX

- 1834 First recorded missionaries to southern states in this dispensation were Elders David W. Patten and W. Parrish. who wrote a letter to Oliver Cowdery from Paris, Tennessee on Oct 11, 1834.
- 1843 Elder Daniel Cathcart and William Brown called to serve a mission in Pensacola, Florida by the Prophet Joseph Smith. To date no records have been found that they filled that mission.
- 1845 **April 24 - June 18** Phineas Young, brother of Brigham Young, distributes copies of the Book of Mormon to the Indian Chiefs in Florida.
- 1846 Some Southern Saints left their homes to join those going west. Among them, and probably those best known, were the Mississippi Saints. They expected to intercept the Vanguard Company but turned south at Fort Laramie when travelers returning from the west reported the Vanguard Company had not passed yet. They wintered in Pueblo, Colorado where they built log homes, a meeting house and planted crops.
- 1875 Southern States Mission organized. Seven elders called to serve missions including in the number Joseph Standing, from Hampton's station on Bear River, Box Elder County, Utah; and John Morgan, of Salt Lake City. The seven elders elected Elder Henry G. Boyle to serve as president.
- 1876 Elder Henry G. Boyle set apart at October conference of the Church as president of the SSM
- 1878 Elder John Morgan called to succeed Elder Henry G. Boyle as president of SSM.
- 1879 **July 21** Elder Joseph Standing murdered by a mob near Varnell Station, Whitfield County, Georgia.
- 1885 Elder John Morgan who served as President of the SSM twice, said he, and some other prominent Church leaders, visited Florida in 1885.
- 1894 **March 1** Florida made part of the Southern States Mission
- 1895 **January 31** Pensacola canvassed by Elders  
**May 16** First reported Sabbath School organized in the Coe Mills Community in Liberty County. Total officers and pupils 12. Pupils in Primary 12. (Isom Journal) Florida Conf. Records report May 15th with Elder Bryant B. Copley and J.C. Jenson organizing. Bro. J.A. Dugger, Supt. and Louisa Dugger, Secy.  
**June 20** Liberty County Sunday School organized  
**November 1** Under instructions from President Elias S. Kimball of the Southern States Mission, the South Alabama Conference was divided, and the Florida Conference was organized. Elder Joseph A. West was appointed president of the new conference. This was reported to be the first official Church



organization in Florida. Missionaries were led to the state by Joseph A. West from Alabama to organize the Florida Conference the Southern States Mission. (FCR) (*NOTE Manuscript History of Church states Oct 1*)

**November** Missionary work began in the Suwannee County area .

1896

**Jan 9** Two Elders forced to leave Tallahassee

**May 30 - 31** First Florida Church Conference in Florida was held at Ann Arbor near Live Oak, in Suwannee, County (*See details in Florida Conference Section*)

**June 28** Woodruff Sabbath School, named in honor of President Wilford Woodruff, was organized by President Joseph A. West and Elders C.J. Brown, W.H. Summerhays and W.G. Fisher five miles west of Live Oak in Suwannee County. Brother Perry Voyles Superintendent, Bros. H.B. Hodges, Brackson J. Voyles, John Miles and Joseph Lamb Assistants. M.H. Redding Secy., W.H. Redding Librarian, John Jowers Treasurer. Number of teachers, Six, Total number of officers, teachers and pupils 42. Located five miles west of Live Oak. (Florida Conference Minute Book).\* *See section on Suwannee County.*

**August 9** President Jos. A. West, Elders C.J. Brown, T.F. Wasden and Wm. Criddle organized a Sabbath School at Hassellville Ashville post office, Jefferson County, Florida. Bro. Addison Hassell, Supt., with Jos. Parker and Wm Lindsey, Assistants.

**August 9** Westland Sunday School organized in Jefferson County. Named in honor of President Joseph West. Thirty-three members enrolled. Isom Journal

**August 22** Mob causes trouble for Elders in Tampa

**Oct 26** Bristol/Pleasant Hill Sunday School organized in Liberty County, Fla. by Bro. Jasher E. Peddie, Supt., with Bro., Monroe Peddie, assistant. There were 39 members enrolled. (See Florida Conf. Record Sect. for details)

**Nov 26** Hasselville Sunday School organized

**December** Mobbing in Suwannee County\* *See Florida Conference Report in Florida Conference Section for full report by Elder W.G. Fisher.*

**December** President Frank Cutler succeeded Joseph West as Florida Conference President

**December** Elders driven from Suwannee by a mob. Elder W.G. Fisher's report in Suwannee County Section

**Railroad was extended from West Paul Beach to Miami in this year making transportation easier for travelling missionaries.**

1897

**Jan 13** Westville Sunday School organized in Jefferson County.

**April 11** Missionaries canvass Olustee and most of Epinger and Russel Counties and find success

**May 1-2** Florida District Conference held in Hassellville

**May 9** First reported branch organized, known as Hassell Branch. Elders Edward L. Black, Chris L. Brown and James H. Allen organized a branch of the Church at Hassel (P.O. Ashville), Jefferson County, Florida with 21 members. Brother Addison Hassell was chosen as Presiding Priest, and it was known as the Hassell Branch. (*More information on this organization, names of members listed and corrections made, in Southern States Mission section.*)

**May 11** Elders Fisher and Isom enter Madison City, Madison County Florida first time in a year and received permission from Mayor to preach on streets. They were refused lodging.

**May 19** Elder L.A. Stevenson gives account of mobbing in Taylor County. Says, 'We were driven like dogs for 18 miles.'

**June 1** Elders reported to be beginning missionary work in Jacksonville

**July 6** Pres. Frank H. Cutler and Jabez Faux organized a Sunday School at Sanderson (now Baker County). H.L. Wester, Supt. and G.R. Blair, Ass't. Supt. and Adaline Canova, secy. (Branch organized Sept. 10th).

**July 25** Elders L.W. Lund and L.R. Lewis met the Saints and friends of New Zion, Sabbath School and organized a new Sunday School at New Zion, Bradford County, Fla. (*See Florida. John Murphy, Supt., and N. Dowling, Asst. Supt. Conf. record section for details.*)

**Aug 29** Elders Brigham Haslam, J.D. Combs, J.B. Wright, and L.A. Stevenson organized a Sabbath School near Highland in Clay County, Fla. with Elisha Nolan, Supt. and Wm Masley, Asst. Supt. (*See Florida Conference Section for more details*)



Sept 10 Sanderson Branch organized. (*See journal in Sanderson/Baker County section kept by sec'y of Sanderson organization*;) President Frank H. Cutler and Elder Jabez Fauz, Jr. organized Saints in Sanderson into a Branch. Brother Henry L. Wester was ordained a priest and set apart as president of the branch and W.D. Mann sustained as clerk of branch .Recording made by Elder Jabez Faux, Jr. secy. Pro T.

Sept 10 Bluff Creek Sunday School located in Liberty County visited by Elders

Sept 26 Bristol/Pleasant Hill Branch organized in Liberty County. Monroe Peddie appointed president

Sept 26 Brother J.B. Wright and Elder L.A. Stevenson organized a Sunday School at Cedar/Ceader Grove in Columbia County (Lake City Post Office address). M.M. Rollison Supt. and J.B. Wright as Asst. Supt. (*A primary teacher is mentioned, but this could be the Sunday School teacher of the younger age children, instead of the other Primary organization.*)

Oct 10 Branch named Westville, was organized at Ashville, Jefferson County, Florida. Note: In various records of the church, this was reported to be the first branch organized in Florida. Note the following from another record, both Westville Branches reported in different counties, organized the same day.

Oct 10 Westville Pres. Frank H. Cutler, Elders Jabez Faux, Jr., John Watts and A.G. Sedgwick organized a branch of the church at Westville, Holmes County, Florida with Bro. W.H. Mayo as Presiding Priest. Called Westville Branch. (Mission Manuscript History – Florida Conf.)

Oct 17 Bro. B.J. Voyles and Supt. L.A. Stevenson met the saints and friends of Lake Bird, Taylor County, at the county line, and organized a Sabbath School, with Supt. B.S. Rowells and J.O. Chance as Asst. Supt. Two primary teachers are mentioned, but could have been the Sunday School teachers for the younger age children, instead of Primary organization. Lake Bird Sunday School organized in Taylor County, Fla. (*See Florida Conf. section for more details*)

Oct 30 Tallahassee, Fla. reopened for missionary work

Nov 30 Elders canvas St. Augustine

Dec 4 Gainesville canvassed by Elders

Dec 31 End of year report of Florida Conference: Total officers and members 523.

Children under eight years 20. Total 543. (Southern Star)

1898

Jan 1-3 First missionary conference was held in Sanderson Attending were Elias S. Kimball, President of the Southern States Mission, Elders Francis M. Lyman and Mathias F. Cowley, members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. George Paul Canova appointed president to replace Henry Wester. (*See Baker County Section for report in journal. Reported to be the first visit to Florida by any apostles.*)

Jan 1 At the meetings of the Florida Conference, a change was made in the territory of the Florida Conference. All territory in Florida west of the Apalachicola River, embracing the counties of Jackson, Calhoun, Washington, Holmes, Walton, Santa Rosa and Escambia were transferred to the South Alabama Conference.

Jan 3 George Paul Canova appointed President of the Sanderson Branch to replace Henry Wester. (SSMI)

Jan 11 Cumorah Sunday School organized with Andrew Knight as superintendent.

Jan 16 New Zion Branch in (Union County) organized with John Murphy as president

Feb 2 Elders forced to leave Tampa

Apr 2 Ocala newspaper prints article favorable to the Church

May 1-2 Second missionary conference held in Hassellford.

May 8 Rutherford Sunday School organized

June 13 In order to enlarge the field of labor in the Florida Conference, the following counties of Georgia were made part of said conference: Decatur, Thomas, Brooks, Lowndes, Echols, Clinch, Charlton, Camden, Glynn, Pierce, Ware, Coffee, Berrien, Colquitt, Mitchell, Baker, Miller and Early.

June 5 George Paul Canova, President of the Sanderson Branch, was murdered 6 miles from his home in Sanderson after attending a Church Conference at New Zion in Bradford County.

Aug 6-7 New Zion Branch Conference held in Union County with President Ben E. Rich of the Southern States Mission presiding.

Aug 7 South Alabama District headquarters organized in Milligan, Florida

Nov 27 Bristol Branch Conference held

- Dec 31 Elias Kimball, President of Southern States Mission reports that 11 Sabbath Schools have been organized in Florida as of this date.
- 1899 Jan 20 Sanderson Branch conference held. (See SS section for details of meeting.  
Mar 26-29 Conference held in Orlando (Records of Southern States Mission)  
May 21 New Zion Branch Conference in Union County  
June 11 Bristol Branch Conference held in Bristol, Florida  
Oct 16 Poley Sunday School organized  
Oct 29 Hasselville Branch Conference held in Jefferson County \*Taken from Southern States Mission Manuscript History .
- 1900 Worldwide Church membership at turn of century was 271,681 (Source: Deseret News 1995-96 Church Almanac)  
Feb 11-12 Florida Conference held in Jacksonville Park Opera House
- 1902 June 8-9 Conference held in Sanderson
- 1905 Mar 20 Saints in Jacksonville entertained the Elders laboring in the city with a social at their "little home on Highway Avenue." (Elders' Journal Vol. 2 Page 325) *See Jax Fl section for entry.*  
Sept Relief Society organized in Blackshear, Ga. (Earliest record found in (MHFC)  
Sept 2 Relief Society organized in Blackshear and Pierce counties Georgia, with Sister Elizabeth Henderson as president. (FCR) (MMH) Earliest Relief Society organization found reference to under Florida Conference in the mission history index.
- 1906 Apr 10 Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association (MIA) organized in Jacksonville, Florida. It was called Young Ladies organization at that time, instead of Young Womens. Sister Mary O. Drumiler president, Mary V. Colby and Ella G. Roberts as counselors. (MHI)  
Apr 7 New church house in Jacksonville. Sunday School reported prospering on Oct 21.  
May 28 Branch Conference held in Sanderson. Sunday School organized.  
May 31 On April 28th, President Tidwell and Elder John J. Lyons arrived in Jacksonville from a trip to southern Georgia, where they had been visiting Saints and friends and report having held several successful meetings and found the Saints enjoying the spirit of the Gospel, and the sisters in Blackshear, Pierce Co., Ga. are getting along nicely with the Relief Society. (MHFC)  
Sept 1-2 General Conference of Elders and Saints. The new church, with its bell tower, at the corner of Claude and Short Streets, was dedicated to the Lord at this Conference with Mission President, Ben E. Rich presiding. Elders' Journal Vol 4 Page 19 (*See acc't in Florida Section*)  
Oct 31 A Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association has been organized at this city with Sister Carrie Tilton as president. (MHI)  
Dec 29 Southern States Mission embraces about 466,000 square miles. Elders traveled about 30,000 miles, 12,464 of them in Florida by foot and 18,875 by rail. Florida had more baptisms (68) than any other state in the Southern States Mission for 1906.
- 1907 Church member Julius C. Newbeck moved his family from Palatka, Florida to Miami and became a strong force in building up the Church in that area.  
The School Board of Clay county passed an order prohibiting the 'Mormon Elders' from preaching in the school houses in the county.  
Jan 18 Conference held at Jacksonville with Elders Geo. A. Smith, B.H. Roberts and Ben E. Rich present. (*See details in Jacksonville Section*)  
Mar 17 First reported Relief Society organization in Florida was in Jacksonville. (FC and MHI)  
Apr 15 The Young Mens MIA in Jacksonville was functioning by this date according to April 15th reference in mission history. (*Another organization date recorded is Nov 1908.*) A reference under 'Florida Conference' in the mission history index shows that on this date a Florida Conference report stated the MIA organizations of Jacksonville held a conjoint meeting on Easter Sunday. This meeting marked the close of the season's work of those associations. No record found on MIA in the Manuscript history-of Florida Conference before the 1906 organization in Jacksonville. The Manuscript history of Jacksonville Branch/Ward reports both MIAs were organized in November 1908, but the mission manuscript history



reports the 1906 and 1907 dates. Many organizations of the early church had to be re-established and re-organized. This could have been the case with the MIAs.

- 1908** Elder Charles A. Callis, Florida missionary, becomes president of the Southern States Mission.  
**April** Branch Conferences held at Ebenezer and Oldtown. Oldtown Conference was held in a bowery on banks of historic Suwannee River. (*See Southern States section*)  
**April** Elders called to Miami to administer to Brother Neubeck's ill child.  
**May 30** Primary organized in Jacksonville, Florida with about 20 children enrolled. Sister Arlene Hyde, daughter of President Oscar W. Hyde, was appointed president of the Primary.(FCR) (MMH)  
**Sept 11** Farewell Social in Atlanta, Georgia in honor of President Ben E. Rich on occasion of his release from the Presidency of the Southern States Mission.
- June 1898 to 1908** Report on progress of work in the Southern States Mission: Book of Mormon sold 25,000, Orson Pratt's Works sold 15,000, Voice of Warnings sold 160,000, Mr. Durant's sold 150,000, Gospel Tracts distributed 3,500,000, Hymn Books sold 25,000 Baptisms 6,800.
- 1909** **Winter of:** The first traveling missionaries come to Miami. They were Elder Reed Gardner from American Fork, Utah, and Elder George Carr from Manassa, Colorado.  
**May 15** Elders C.A. Callis and Geo. W. Wood, filled an appointment at Peoria, Clay County, Fla. Some of the Elders have been troubled with chills and fever, but there are no serious cases of illness among the brethren.
- 1909** **Oct 3rd** Elders visit at Sanderson to reorganize Sunday School first organized May 28, 1906
- 1910** Five traveling missionaries came to Miami with a tent. Discontinued meetings when attendance was poor. Missionaries only came to Miami in winter time.
- 1911** **Jan 28** Conf. held in Sanderson
- 1912** **May 5** Conf. held in Sanderson  
**Dec 15** Branch conf. held in Sanderson
- 1913** Relief Society organized at Carrabell, Florida.
- 1914** Julius C. Neubeck was ordained an elder in Miami by Charles A. Callis, Pres. of the Southern States Mission, then called him on a seven month mission. He was set apart for his mission by Elder Joseph F. Smith, President of the Church, and became the first Elder from Miami to serve a mission.
- 1915** Elder J.C. Neubeck of Miami returns from a seven month mission and is set apart as the Presiding Elder over the members of the Church in Miami  
**May 28** President D.A. Tidwell and Elder R. Ray Nixon organized a Sunday School and held a branch conference at Sanderson. (Elders' Journal Vol. 2 Page 399)
- 1916** **Jan 8** Conf. held in Sanderson
- 1918** **Feb 5** Conf. held in Sanderson  
**May 18** Branch Conf. held in Sanderson
- 1920** **Nov 14** Eighteen members of the Church met on Miami Beach and organized a Sunday School with J.C. Neubeck Supt., H.H. Russell, 1st Ass't., M.E. Fisher, 2nd Ass't and Annie Fisher, Sec'y. Meetings held in home of J.C. Neubeck, then home of H.L. Russell. Later in rented halls.
- 1921** **Apr 13** W.D. Mann president of Sanderson Branch  
**Apr 13** Jacksonville Branch reported in SSMI approx. 200 members . A.O. Jenkins pres.
- 1923** **Jan 7** Sunday School organized in San Mateo, Florida. Classes conducted in home of John Jackson Tilton.
- 1924** Relief Society in Miami was organized in the home of Mrs. Ruby Robinson, (Cameron) in Miami with Mary Padgett, President, Lizzie Turner, 1st Coun.; Lorena Russell, 2nd Coun.; and Nellie Cunningham, Sec'y.
- 1926** **July 2** Charles H. Turley appointed president Jacksonville Branch (SSMI)

- Oct 17 John L. Melrose appointed president Jacksonville Branch (SSMI)  
 Dec 10 Conference held in Jacksonville with President David O. McKay  
 Dec 12 Jacksonville Florida Chapel at Park and Copeland dedicated by President David O. McKay
- 1927 Sept 11 L.H. Brimhall appointed counselor in Jacksonville Florida Branch
- 1928 Mar 4 Dedicatory services for San Mateo Chapel by Charles A. Callis, president of Southern States Mission, Atlanta, Ga. officiating.  
 Elder Charles A. Callis, Pres. of the Sou. States Miss instructed the Miami Saints to locate a good lot suitable to build a chapel. A lot was purchased at N.W. 29th Street and 6th Ave.
- 1927 Sister Jenny Neubeck first lady missionary to be called from Miami Branch  
 Mar 12 The name of the Florida Conference was changed to the Florida District  
 June 26 Woman's Relief Society organized in San Mateo composed of six members: Lizzie Turner president, Mattie Hanna, first counselor, Evelyn Tilton second counselor.
- 1929 Dec 31 MIA organized in San Mateo, Florida, the second of its kind in the state  
 Aug 29 Sanderson Branch Chapel dedicated by President Charles A. Callis
- 1930 Apr Miami Church members began holding regular services in their new chapel.  
 May 31 MIA organized in Miami with Mrs. Nellie Cunningham president young women and Robert G. Sorensen president of young men.  
 Dec 31 Total membership of the Church in Florida was 3, 164. The four organized branches were: Jacksonville, Miami, San Mateo, and Tampa.
- 1931 Primary organization formed in Miami with Miss Dorothy Slay in charge  
 Oct 30 Miami chapel on 29th Street dedicated by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith. Membership grown to 180 members.
- 1932 Sept 11 Albert Kirkland called as president of Sanderson Branch
- 1933 July 24 Tilton family organize first annual Pioneer Day celebration and rodeo in San Mateo, Florida
- 1934 President Charles A. Callis is called to the Council of the Twelve Apostles: Elder LeGrand Richards becomes president of the Southern States Mission.  
 Jan 20 Farewell Program honors Elder Chas A. Callis (Member of the Quorum of Twelve) and his wife Grace (President of Womens Relief Society of the Southern States Mission) given in LDS Chapel corner of Park and Copeland Streets in Jacksonville.  
 July 21-23 Leadership Convention held by the Southern States Mission supervised under the new mission president, LeGrand Richards in Jacksonville. During the program a debate between June E. Smart and Richard M. Ball versus Henry Chase and Garnetta Valentine on 'That it is now proper for a girl to get her man.' A drama: 'Mother Mine' was given to demonstrate M.I.A. Activities. The Growth of Mormonism in Story and Song was presented by the missionaries and concluded with remarks by President LeGrand Richards, 'Qualifications for Leadership'. A festival of musical numbers were held in abundance throughout the convention that included vocal quartette, solos, readings, instrument solos and quartette.  
 24 Pioneer Day held at Lackawanna Park in Jacksonville
- 1935 Feb 3 L.J. Maddock named president Jacksonville Branch  
 Aug 25 Sanderson Branch transferred to Florida District according to SSMI. Fla. District was not organized until Apr 25, 1937.
- 1936 Jan 12 T.C. Copeland appointed president Jacksonville Branch  
 Dec 12 Reception held in Morocco Temple in Jacksonville to honor Elder Reed Smoot. Honored guests included state and city leaders. Hosts and hostesses for the event were the T.C. Copelands, Carlos Starlings, Edward Kirklands, L.H. Brimhalls, L.J. Maddock, A.O. Jenkins, O.H. Starlings, and Elder A.C. Christensen. The program included dancing and musical performances.
- 1937 First chapel in central Florida, the Lake Dot Chapel, dedicated in Orlando. Roy Douberly, first branch president.



- April 25** Jacksonville now under local district presidency. Florida District created: President James R. Boone *For details of this organization see Florida District Section.*
- April 30-May 2nd** Southern States Mission Jubilee under the direction of LeGrand Richards Mission President, was held in Atlanta, Georgia. President Heber J. Grant was honored guest. The program included music, drama, speech, dancing and athletics.
- June 2-4** 2nd annual Florida State Leadership Convention. Opening session held in St. Paul's School at the corner of Forbes and Acosta Streets, Jacksonville. Conducting was President Karl G. Burdett. Saturday morning session held at LDS Chapel at Park and Copeland Streets. Attending was Mission President Merrill D. Clayson. Grand Ball was held Saturday evening at St. Paul's School.
- 1938** **Oct 28** A south Florida District was organized. President was Lynn C. Markham, president; E.W. Erickson, 1st. Coun., and James A. Martell, 2nd. Coun.
- 1939** **Aug 9** Branch Conf. held at Sanderson
- 1940** **Jan 14** E. Kirkland sustained as president of Jacksonville Branch  
**Nov 24** Conference of Jacksonville Branch  
**June 28-30** Leadership Convention held in Jacksonville for the South and Central Florida Districts, Florida and West Florida Districts. President James R. Boone, Conducting. Program included a musical festival, followed by a grand ball.
- 1941** Elder Reid Smoot, an apostle and first Mormon to be elected to the U.S. Senate, dies in St. Petersburg, Florida while vacationing.
- 1945** **Mar 4** Neil Kirkland appointed Sanderson Branch President.
- 1946** **Dec 31** Worldwide Church membership totaled 996,506.
- 1947** **Jan 19** The Florida Stake (No. 163 now Jacksonville West), was organized by Elders Charles A. Callis and Harold B. Lee. Alvin Canova Chace called as Florida's first Stake President with 1st counselor Jacquard M. Lindsey, 2nd E. Coleman Madsen. Stake Clerk George Hill. (*Note: Florida Stake was the fourth stake organized east of the Mississippi (N.Y. # 110 in 1934, Chicago #118 in 1936 and Washington, D.C. #131 in 1940 . Florida Stake was considered the first stake organized in the South.)*)  
**Jan 19** Jacksonville Branch becomes a ward in new Florida Stake  
**Jan 20** Apostle Charles A. Callis dies from heart attack in Jacksonville while riding in car with A.O. Jenkins, Sr. ,in whose home he had been visiting, one day following organization of Florida Stake. He was 81 and had presided over the Southern States Mission for 27 years..  
**Jan 23** 12:15 p.m. Funeral service for Charles A Callis in Park and Copeland Streets Chapel  
**Sept 14** Stanley Clyde Johnson called as Bishop of Springfield Ward in Jacksonville at age of 21
- 1948** Florida Stake Singing Mother's conference held in Jacksonville.
- 1949** **Feb** LDS Palatka Girls Chorus of the Church performed on a radio broadcast in Jacksonville. They were directed by Vella Tilton with Mrs. E.M. Hawkins as pianist. (*See names of performers in section of Palatka/San Mateo/Putnam County.*)
- 1950** Church purchases the Deseret Ranch located in Florida under direction of Apostle Henry D. Moyle.
- 1952** **Oct 23** Florida Stake primary convention held in Jacksonville Ward. President Carrie V. Burman, 1st counselor Ruth B. Boone, 2nd, Eunice B. Tucker, Sec'y. Kathleen V. Allen.
- 1954** **Nov 19** Elder Marion D. Hanks dedicated the Fort Myers Branch Chapel, a remodeled Army barracks.  
**Nov 20** Elder Marion D. Hanks dedicated the Fort Lauderdale Branch Chapel which had been constructed at an estimated cost of \$43,000.
- 1955** **Jan 3** Ground breaking for Florida Stake Tabernacle valued at nearly \$400,000 and built for \$248,000 First shovel of dirt turned by Elder Henry D. Moyle.  
**Jan 11** Ground breaking for Miami Branch by Elder Henry D. Moyle for Church at corner of N.W. 95th St. and 17th Ave.

- Sept 11 A Branch was officially organized in Key West with Verl J. Scadlock as the first Branch President, Raymond W. Hoglund and Sanford W. Wilson counselors.
- Oct 9 Sunday School organized in Homestead with about 20 members in the home of Eldwin E. Wooten .
- 1956 Nov 25 Florida Stake Tabernacle, 4087 Hendricks Ave, Jacksonville was dedicated by President David O. McKay.
- Nov 25 Members of church gathered for the first time as members of the Homestead Branch.
- 1957 Nov 24 Dedication of Miami Branch Chapel by President David O McKay
- 1958 Feb 23 Orlando Stake organized (number 257),( 2nd stake in Florida) by Elders Henry D. Moyle and Delbert L. Stapley. W. Leonard Dugger, President.
- 1959 May 15 Branch of Church organized in Hollywood, Florida Richard E. Michaud Branch president, John Scarber and James P. Gay counselors.
- Oct 25 Tampa Stake created (Number 289), Edwin H. White, President
- 1960 Nov 1 Florida Mission created out of Southern States Mission, Karl R. Lyman, President
- Nov 13 Miami Stake created (Number 311) Paul R. Cheesman, President 1st Coun. E. Coleman Madsen, 2nd. Coun. Clyde Stanley Johnson
- 1962 Orlando Stake Center built at corner of Park Avenue and Formosa Street at a cost of \$450,000.
- 1963 Elder Henry D. Moyle, counselor in the First Presidency dies in his sleep at Deseret Ranch near Orlando. Att'y. E. Coleman Madsen of Jacksonville on assignment with President Moyle, and his wife Marion (Hinson) Madsen, assisted Sister Moyle.
- Sept 1 Stanley Clyde Johnson, serving as 2nd Counselor to Miami Stake President Paul R. Cheesman, was sustained as the second stake president of the Miami Stake and set apart by Elder Harold B. Lee.
- 1967 Oct 22 Ward officially organized in Hollywood, Fl.
- 1968 Sept 15 Original Florida Stake with approx. 5,825 members and 11 wards divided. Jacksonville Stake (now Jacksonville East and Number 465) was created from Florida Stake (now Jacksonville West) with L. Blaine Vorwaller, President. President Henry Jenkins remained as president of the original Florida Stake.
- First Spanish-American Branch organized in Miami
- 1969 June 15 Pensacola Stake created (Number 486) S. Elroy Stapleton, President
- 1970 Oct 18 Ft. Lauderdale created (Number 530). Stanley Clyde Johnson called as Stake President.
- 1971 Florida South Mission created.
- Hialeah Florida Spanish Branch organized.
- 1972 Mar 3-4 Florida Stake celebrates 25th anniversary. President Harold B. Lee attended.
- 1973 Jan 21 Tallahassee Stake created (Number 594), Jay Nicholas Lybbert, President
- 1974 Spring Florida Stake was renamed the Jacksonville Florida West Stake and the Jacksonville Stake's name was changed to the Jacksonville Florida East Stake. (Source L. Blaine Vorwaller, Jax East Stake President.)
- Aug 25 Third Ward Chapel dedicated by Elder L. Tom Perry. Frank Milton, Sr. Bishop. *(See story of L. Blaine Vorwaller for details of commitment to Saints concerning this.)*
- Nov 19 Washington Temple dedicated, first Temple east of the Mississippi after Kirtland and Nauvoo.
- Florida Ft. Lauderdale Mission organized
- Aug 18 St. Petersburg Stake established (Number 651), Bruce Earl Belnap, president
- 1975 October 25-26 Douglas Georgia Stake was created out of two mission districts formally part of the Jacksonville East Stake. Two units, the Waycross Georgia Ward and Axson Georgia Ward, went to the new Douglas Georgia Stake. Members from these two wards totaled about 650.
- Nov 8-9 Elder John H. Vandenberg, at Jacksonville Florida East Stake Conference added two new units into the Jacksonville Florida East Stake from the South Georgia mission district. They were the

Brunswick Georgia Ward and Darien Georgia Branch, totaling approx. 450 members.

**Nov 16** Marianna (now Panama City) Stake created (Number 732), Riley Malone Peddie, President

**1976 Feb 29** Gainesville Stake created (Number 746), James R. Christianson, President

Florida Tampa Mission created

**Dec 12** Palatka Ward Dedicated. Presiding and dedicatory prayer Elder LeGrand Richards:

**1977 Nov 13** Cocoa Stake created (Number 897) Cleavy Eugene Waters, President.

LDS Social Services Center directing and counselling adoptions established in Florida.

**1978 March 31** L Blaine Vorwaller of Jacksonville, Florida set apart as a regional representative by Elder LeGrand Richards.

**April 30** L. Blaine Vorwaller, Jacksonville East Stake President officially released as Jacksonville Florida East Stake President to resume Regional Representative duties.

First Spanish Ward created in Miami

**May 7** Savannah Georgia Stake organized with Robert W. Cowart as Stake President. Included as part of the Orlando Florida Temple District.

**June 8** President Spencer W. Kimball announces worldwide that all mankind, regardless of race, color, based upon their worthiness and meeting the requirements of the priesthood may receive the Melchizedek Priesthood of our Lord and Savior.

**1980** Florida-Deseret Mormon Scout Encampment held at Deseret Ranch

**June 27** Lakeland (now Winter Haven) Stake created (Number 1153), Waymon E. Meadows, President

**June 28-29** Area Conference held in Lakeland, Florida

**Oct 12** West Palm Beach (now Stuart) Stake organized (Number 1190) Donald Wayne Carson, President

**1982 Nov 14** Deland (now Lake Mary) Stake created (Number 1380), Marvin Knowles, President

**1983** Atlanta Temple dedicated

Florida Mission discontinued

**1984 May 13** Ft. Myers Stake created (Number 1472), John M. Cyrocki, President

Florida Mission reestablished at Ft. Lauderdale.

Mormon astronaut, Don Lind travels into space on Challenger Mission.

Mormon astronaut, Jake Garn, flew on the Discovery Mission.

**1986 Mar 16** Lake City Florida Stake created Number 1590. Ernest R. Peacock, President

**Feb 2** S. Clyde Johnson appointed by James E. Hill, Jacksonville West Stake President, to begin compiling history of the original Florida Stake: now Jacksonville West.

LDS Employment Center assisting members in obtaining employment established.

**1987 Nov 15** Jacksonville North Stake created (Number 1660), Robert E. Bone, President

Florida Jacksonville Mission organized

**1989 Dec 31** Total Church members in Florida, 82,000. (More members than any other state east of the Mississippi River.)

**1992 Jan 19** Miami South (now Homestead) Stake created (Number 1842), Dean Michael Madsen, President

**June 20** Ground breaking ceremony for Orlando Temple under direction of Elder James E. Faust, member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

**Aug 23** Brandon Stake created (Number 1898), James Franklin Henry, President

**Aug 30** Orlando South created (Number 1900) Carl E. Reynolds, Jr. President

**1993 May 1** Angel Moroni erected on its 167-foot high spire on Orlando Temple

**Dec 31** Total Church members in Florida 93,000. (Only nine states have more members than Florida.)

**1994 Jan** Miami Stake reorganized as the first Spanish-speaking stake with Johnny R. West, a Colombia native, called as stake president.

**Jan 16** Pompano Beach Stake created (Number 1970), Richard M. Smith, President



June 15 Jack F. Joyner, a former regional representative and stake president, called to preside over the Orlando Florida Temple. His wife, Margaret Staton Joyner called to serve as temple matron.

Sept 10-30 Open house for the Orlando Temple

Oct 9 Special cornerstone sealing ceremony for Orlando Temple. Elder Boyd K. Packer seals the metal box of artifacts in the cornerstone block as LDS Church President Howard W. Hunter, attends in wheel chair with his first counselor, Gordon B. Hinckley and second counselor Thomas S. Monson. Also attending ceremony were Elders James E. Faust, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, and members of the Quorum of the Seventy Elders W. Eugene Hansen, Stephen D. Nadauld, Alexander B. Morrison, and W. Don Ladd.

Oct 9-11 Following cornerstone ceremonies, 12 dedicatory sessions began. The Orlando Temple was dedicated by President Howard W. Hunter. Music for first session was sung in Spanish. Each session included the Hosannah Anthem. It is the first temple to be furnished with contemporary-style furniture in the celestial room. 16,500 feet of 23-karat gold leaf was used throughout the temple. The 69,000 square foot temple was constructed for approximately \$15.5 million.

- 1995 June 20th..100th anniversary of first known Sunday School in Florida organized in Liberty County.  
Oct 1st..100th anniversary Florida Conference organized from South Alabama Conference.  
November 1st 100th anniversary of Florida Conference organization. (First official church organization in Florida.  
Dec 31..Worldwide Church membership 10,000,000. In Florida approximately 100,000 members.  
There are between 15,000to16,000 Spanish-speaking members in Florida.
- 1996 100th anniversary of first Florida Church conference, held at Ann Arbor in Live Oak
- 1997 100th anniversary of first Branch organized in Florida at Hassel in Jefferson, County and following in the same year were Sanderson in Baker, Bristol in Liberty , and Westville in Holmes County.  
100th anniversary of first Florida District Conference held in Hassellville in Jefferson County.  
150th Sesquicentennial Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints celebrated worldwide.  
50th anniversary of the organization of Florida's 1st Stake, Alvin C. Chace President
- 1998 100th anniversary death of George Paul Canova the only known martyr for Church in Florida

*Information compiled in this LDS southern history time-line has been contributed by:*

*David McPhail of Salt Lake City,  
President Stanley Clyde Johnson of Newberry, Florida,  
Vella (Mrs. Woody) Tilton of San Mateo Florida,  
Samuel Isom's Missionary Journal ,  
Liahona Elders' Journal,  
dates given in oral interviews by early church leaders,  
the personal papers of Alvin C. and Alzada Chace,  
Florida District Records,  
various LDS Church records from Church Historical Department in SLC  
and personal research done by the author.*



# TWENTY-ONE SOUTHERN STATES MISSION PRESIDENTS

- 1 - Henry G. Boyle — Oct. 1876-1878
- 2 - John Morgan — Jan. 1878-1884
- 3 - Brigham Henry Roberts — 1884-1886 (Interim President)
- 4 - John Morgan — 1886-1888
- 5 - William Spry — 1888-1891
- 6 - Jonathan Golden Kimball — 1891-1894
- 7 - Elias S. Kimball — 1894-1898
- 8 - Benjamin Erastus Rich — July 1, 1898-June 30, 1902
- 9 - Ephriam H. Nye — June 30, 1902-May 15, 1903
- 10 - Benjamin Erastus Rich — May 15, 1903-1908
- 11 - Charles Albert Callis — \*Aug. 26, 1908 -(\*\*October 9, 1908) Jan 31, 1934
- 12 - LeGrand Richards — 1934-1937 (18,000 members in nine mission districts)
- 13 - Heber Meeks — August 1943-April 20, 1948
- 14 - Albert Choules — April 20, 1948-April 15, 1952
- 15 - Peter J. Ricks — April 1952-October 11, 1955
- 16 - Berkeley L. Bunker — October 11, 1955-May 1, 1959
- 17 - J. Byron Ravsten — May 1, 1959-December 18, 1963
- 18 - Fauntleroy Hunsaker — December 18, 1963-March 21, 1965
- 19 - Roy B. Evanson — March 21, 1965-March 22, 1968
- 20 - Charles W. Nibley — March 22, 1968-August 15, 1970
- 21 - J. Orvin Hicken — August 15, 1970

Source:

\*\* David FLake Boone, Provo, Utah

\* Beloved Apostle: LeGrand Richards by Lucile C. Tate Chapt. 11, pge 166

The Administration of President Ben E. Rich page 144

# SOUTHERN STATES MISSION THEME SONG

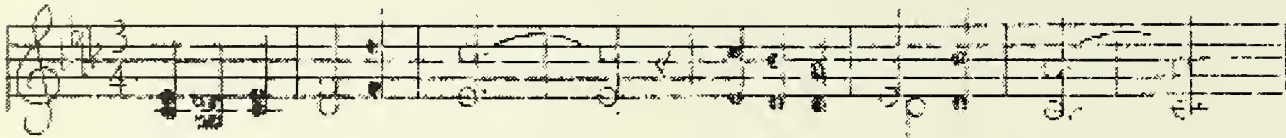
Words by:

Elmer Killian

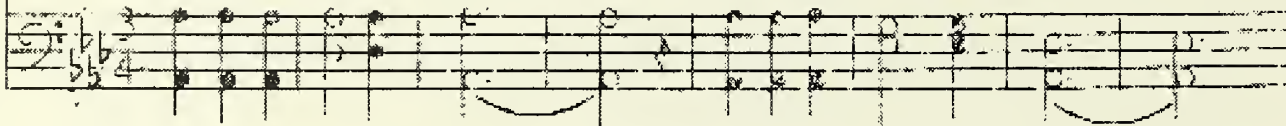
"THE MISSION FIELD"

Arranged by:

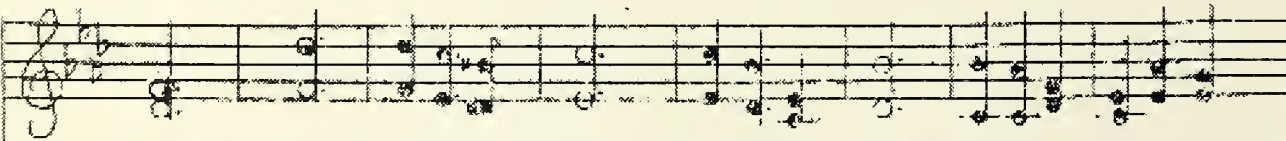
Lynn C. Matheson



1. We're in the Mission Field, Serving the Lord Above.
2. We're in the Mission Field, Serving a Heavenly King;
3. We're in the Mission Field, Learning a better life



Silver and gold will tempt us not, Our labor is of love. We'll go  
Bringing the light to those who stray, Some day our praise they'll sing. We'll keep  
Walking by faith in God above; Straight through this world of strife. We'll keep



preaching, teaching the truth, Ah proudly too, every day through, We'll be  
working, Tracting each day, Paving our way, Humbly we'll pray, We'll keep  
learning, Seeking the goal, Saving the souls, Asking no tolls, God di-



happy, In all we do, Spreading the Gospel true....  
striving to do our best, Spreading the Gospel true....  
rects us, as onward we go, Spreading the Gospel true....





# SOUTHERN STATES MISSION

Organized November 16, 1882  
(Southern Star April 1, 1899 Vol. 1 No. 18)

## Minutes of Conferences Held 1898

January 1, 1898. The Elders, Saints and friends of the Florida Conference convened in annual conference capacity. The place of meeting was the little town of Sanderson, Baker County, Florida.

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m. by President Frank H. Cutler. The hymn, "How Quick the Months Have Passed Away" was sung after which prayer was offered by John Z. Brown. Continuing the hymn "Now Let Us Rejoice in the Day of Salvation" was then sung.

The incoming train brought with it the following distinguished visitors: Apostle Francis M. Lyman, Matthias F. Cowley, President of the Southern States Mission, Elias S. Kimball and wife, and Chris J. Brown laboring at the office at Chattanooga. President Frank H. Cutler, the first speaker, gave a brief report of the labors of the past year, which showed marked progress. Before concluding, he extended to all present a hearty welcome

and trusted that all would be mutually benefited in meeting together. He now introduced (introduced) the brethren (sic) of the authorities to the congregation. Elder John Z. Brown spoke a short time, expressed his desire of hearing an Apostle while in the missionary field. Elders L. Black, L.H. Stevenson, Elias A. Gee and L.W. Robbins followed testifying of the truth of the Gospel and expressed a desire to teach all the plan of salvation. Apostle Lyman followed, and said: "Our motives are to present to you with something better than other people have. Our people are open to conviction, and when people transgress they sometimes are gathered by those who have easier faith than ours. The Gospel requires us to forsake all if necessary. We do not present an easy way to be saved. Christ's was not easy, and so is ours. I am pleased to meet the welcome of the people. You cannot find five hundred ministers in the Southern States or any where in the world who travel as our Elders do, in the way Heaven has designed, without salary. Our Elders do not have written sermons, but study the life of Christ, and only upon the Spirit to prompt them to speak, upon such subjects, pertaining to the Gospel, as well by best needed for the occasion."

Source: Church Historian Dept..Film-Florida District  
Pt. 1 1893-1942 Section Record of Members 1898-1899  
Libr. #2104, pg. 215



**Missionary Conference photo at Sanderson, Jan 1-3, 1898**

Middle row, center, man in light coat with bow tie and full beard is Apostle Francis M. Lyman;  
man in dark coat to his left is apostle Matthias Cowley; to apostle Cowley's left is apostle Elias Kimball.





#### **Missionaries and Church Leaders**

*Missionary Conference photo at Sanderson, Jan 1-3, 1898*

*Middle row, center, man in light coat with bow tie and full beard is Apostle Francis M. Lyman; man in dark coat to his left is apostle Matthias Cowley; to apostle Cowley's left is apostle Elias Kimball.*

#### **Branch Conference in Sanderson: The Southern Star 1899**

Sanderson, Baker County, Fla., Jan 20 — The members of the branch and neighboring friends met at 10 a.m. The following Elders being present: President Charles G. Parker, his counselors, R.M. Robinson and George W. Skidmore; Superintendent of Sabbath Schools Elias A. Gee, and Elders Mark E. Kartchner, Preston A. Bushman, W.J. Shakespear and E.L. Pomeroy.

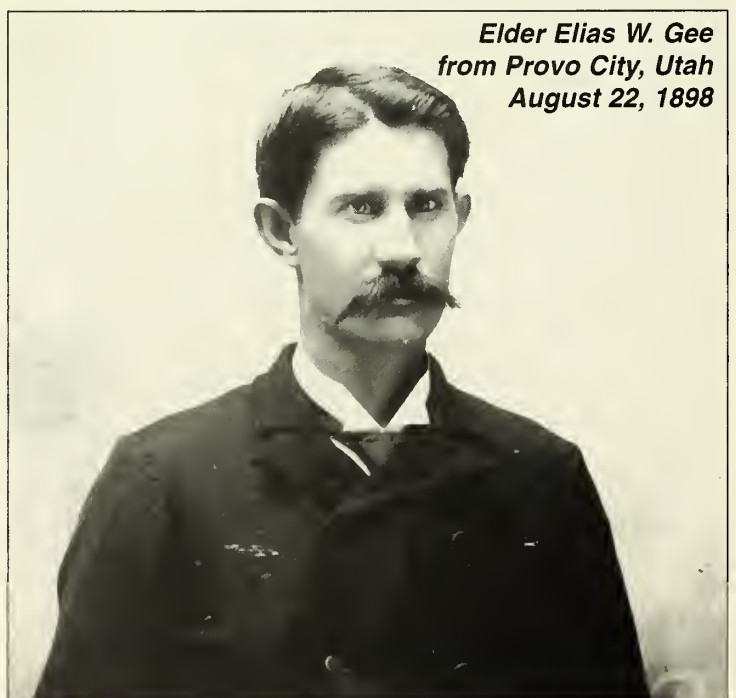
The following programme was rendered, showing much credit to members of the school and local superintendency:

1. Address: H.L. Wester, superintendent of the school.
2. Concert Recitation of the Articles of Faith, Primary class.
3. Children's Song Prayer, Intermediate class.
4. Essay — Opportunity — Miss Adaline Canova.
5. Singing, "The Mormon Boy", Alonzo Canova.
6. Answers to Catechism in Concert — Church history by intermediate class.
7. Song "In Our Lovely Deseret" Primary class.
8. Heb. 11;1\_16 Read by James R. Tarrell
9. Biography of Joseph Smith by Thomas R. Canova
10. Song "Bees of Deseret" Primary class

11. Bible and Book of Mormon Reading 5th Chapter of Matthew and 12th chapter of 11 Nephi, showing the familiar spirit existing between the two books — Intermediate class

12. Quartette "Heaven Is My Home" Misses Adaline and Kittie Canova and Elders Mark E. Kartchner and R.M. Robinson.

(Program given in part from source: The Southern Star)



**Elder Elias W. Gee**  
**from Provo City, Utah**  
**August 22, 1898**



## Conference in Orlando, Florida March 26-29, 1899

On the evening of March 26, 1899, the Elders met President Rich in counsel meeting in the dining room of the Treemont Hotel. March 27th was spent in Priesthood meeting at the Armory building. The Elders were assigned their companions and fields of labor as follows:

President C.G. Parker, Lulu, Columbia County, Fl.  
R.M. Robinson and E.L. Pomeroy, Visiting Elders  
G.W. Skidmore and W.O. Phelps, Visiting Elders  
M.E. Kartchner and W.H. Staples, Sunday School Superintendents  
H.P. Randal and N.H. Black, Lake County, Fla.  
J.H. Allen and Hiram Monson, St. Johns County, Fl.  
R.B. Cutler and P.A. Bushman, Citrus, Sumter, Hernando Counties, Fl.  
J.T. Heninger and K.R. Sowards, Polk County, Fla.  
J.A. Wixom and J.B. Wasden, Duval County, Fl.  
N.U.S.C. Jensen and J.R. Sellers, Hillsboro County, Fla.  
A.G. Sedwick and George Williams, Orange County, Fla.  
A.B. Snowball and Orson Wilkins, Volusia Co., Fla.  
J.D. Coombs and D.H. Jones, Clay Co., Fl.  
D.S. Lewis and C.A. Burrows, Bradford Co., Fl.  
Albert Jefferies and W.M. Irvin, Marion Co., Fl.  
L.R. Lewis and Conrad Maag, Levy Co., Fl.  
W.J. Shakespeare and Aaron Jacobson, LaFayette Co., Fl.  
L.D. Cox and W.J. Southerland, Ocala Co., Fl.  
Hyrum Olsen and W.H. Mace, Alachua Co., Fl.

President Parker, in behalf of the Elders of the Florida Conference, thanked the city officials, hotel proprietors and citizens of Orlando for all courtesies extended.

Thus ended the first Conference ever held in any of the cities of Florida.  
(Program given in part from The Southern Star 1899 pages 157-158. Vol. 2 No. 19)

### The First Missionaries To The Southern States and Florida

(Contributed information by S. Clyde Johnson, Newberry, Fl.)

Apparently the first missionaries to the southern states in this dispensation were Elder David W. Patten and Elder W. Parrish who wrote to Oliver Cowdrey from Paris, Tennessee, on October 11, 1834. They had started from Missouri on the 12th of September, 1834, being led by the Spirit to go to the South, like Phillip of old,

— began preaching as we travel across the south corner of Kentucky.” The letter was addressed to Kirtland, Ohio. This is specifically mentioned in the April, 1843, General Conference of the Church when Elders William Brown and Daniel Cathcart were assigned to labor in the Pensacola area. Efforts have been made through searching family history accounts, missionary diaries and reports, to find clues of their having filled this assignment but to no avail. As time passed and the work progressed, many more missionaries were sent to the South. The Southern States Mission was established and at different times was headquartered in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and at Atlanta, Georgia. All the southern states were covered and the Church grew by leaps and bounds. Many Southerners gathered with the Saints who at the call of the prophet participated in settling the West. Among them, and probably the best known, were the Mississippi Saints who left their homes and headed toward the route taken by Brigham Young and the pioneers. They departed from their homes in 1846 expecting to intercept the Vanguard Company, but when travelers returning from the West reported the Vanguard Company had not passed yet, they turned south at Fort Laramie and wintered in Pueblo, Colorado, where they built log homes, a meeting house, and planted crops.

Phineas Young distributed copies of the Book of Mormon to the Indians in Florida April 24 through June 18th in 1845.

The Elders’ Journal was published by the Southern States Mission and contained writings of the general authorities as well as local news in all of the South. Each state was organized into a conference with three of the traveling missionaries as the conference presidency. Some states had more than one conference. The Journal carried monthly reports from the conference presidents including the arrivals and departures of missionaries, their assignments and reassignments, and other news of this progress of the work in each conference. These Journals have become some of the finest sources for historical information of those days.

According to the record of the life of Elder John Morgan, who served twice as President of the Southern States Mission (1878-1884 and 1886-1888), he and some other prominent Church leaders visited in Florida in 1885.

An Elder Benj. W. Scott was asked by the First Presidency to surrender his letter of appointment ‘as he was preaching Methodism from his brother’s pulpit.’ Elder Scott was assigned to the state of Florida in June 1894 and the letter from the First Presidency was sent to President Elias Kimball, president of the Southern States Mission on February 1, 1895. ( Minutes of Florida District 1895-1902 Bk 2102 p. 93 & 254).

The Florida Conference was formed and missionary work began in earnest on November 1, 1895, when Elias S. Kimball, President of the Southern States Mission authorized it. Fifteen Elders led by Joseph A. West, son of Samuel Walker West who was baptized in South Carolina in 1835 through the preaching of David W. Patten and others, were assigned to that new conference. Elias S. Kimball was uncle to President Spencer W. Kimball.

Led by Elias S. Kimball, President of the Southern States Mission, Elders Francis M. Lyman and Mathias F. Cowley, members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, met with the Saints and missionaries at the Sanderson Branch west of Macclenny, Florida, on January 1-2, 1898. President Kimball announced on this occasion that this was the first time Florida had seen a living apostle in this dispensation. Adaline Canova was the secretary of the Sunday School at the time and her father, George P. Canova was branch president. He was also ordained Elder at this conference. (See Canova section for Canova history and eventual murder in Sanderson, and account of his grandson, Alvin Canova Chace, rise to become the South's first stake president.)

According to SSMR the second conference of the missionaries in Florida was held in Hassellville in Jefferson County on May 1-2, 1898, where the Sunday School had been named after the FC President, Joseph A. West. A conference of record was noted in Southern States annals as being held in Live Oak, Suwannee County, Florida, May 31, 1896.

Contributing greatly to the preparation for the first stake in the South at Jacksonville, Florida, were the missionaries who served in Florida. At the turn of the century, much success by the missionaries was reported especially in Key West. Other places which enjoyed varying degrees of success were Orlando where the first missionaries were driven out, but later missionaries were welcomed by city officials: Sanford, Starke, Peoria, Kissimmee, Sanderson, Tampa, St. Augustine, Duck Pond, Lake City, and Middleburg.

Since Charles A. Callis organized the original Florida Stake, his labors in the Southern States Mission are highlighted here as typical of the work of the missionaries in that period. With his wife, Grace, he arrived in the mission headquarters from Coalville, Utah, May 1, 1906. Charles Callis succeeded D.A. Tidwell as president of the Florida Conference. His reports tell of the movement of the missionaries and their reception among the people of Florida. The organization of the YWMIA and the Relief Society in Jacksonville are mentioned. Ella Hill Roberts is thought to be the first person baptized in Jacksonville, Florida, in this dispensation. While visiting her father Thaddeus Hill in Sanderson, who was a pioneer in the

Church, she was baptized on July 25, 1897. Her husband, Abel Roberts, would become Chief of Police in Jacksonville, but was not baptized until November 26, 1905 along with Foster Hill. Her father Thaddeus, was the single eye-witness (other than the assassins) to the martyrdom of George P. Canova (see account in Canova section). Ella's sister, Nellie Hill Maddock, would become the first lady missionary to be called to serve a mission from this area. (See account in Maddock-Hill section).

LeGrand Richards arrived January 6, 1934, at SSM headquarters in Atlanta, Ga. to take the place as president vacated by Elder Charles A. Callis who was leaving to serve as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. President Callis had labored faithfully during periods of strong prejudice against the Mormons; in fact, one county was still closed to proselyting. His philosophy had been one of decentralization. He had kept his missionaries out in the country among people of humble circumstances and away from urban centers, where he felt temptations were great. President Richards, on the other hand, as a former bishop and stake president, saw the future of the Church in the South in terms of wards and stakes located in towns and cities, yet felt that their influence would naturally spread out into the countryside. From his previous experience as mission president he also knew the value of proselyting not only the poorer people but also the better educated middle-class men and women. These would more readily give credibility to the message of the Restoration and could eventually take over the branch and district leadership in the South, thus releasing the missionary leaders to spend their time finding contacts and bringing them to conversion. (Taken from Beloved Apostle: LeGrand Richards, by Lucile C. Tate, Chap. 11: pg. 167.) (*Note: See dancing program in Gold and Green Ball section.*)

### **Southern States Mission Eight Men Met Death At Hands Of Persecutors**

(Church News Article September 5, 1959)

The missionary effort of the Church has met some of its greatest success and its most violent opposition in the Southern States Mission.

At the time that the anti-Mormon crusade was at its height in Utah during the 80's and 90's, inflammatory newspaper reports fanned Southern prejudice into frequent explosions of hate. The mission president's report in the mission organ, "The Southern Star," that "there was no mob violence this month," was unusual during this period. The Elders were constantly harassed by gangs of Mormon-haters.



An example of this mob action was the beating of four missionaries in September 1888 in Tennessee. The four were dragged from their beds in the home of a convert at about 2 a.m. They were taken into the woods and beaten across their backs with large willows until blood was drawn from the large, red welts. The Elders were then ordered to leave the county.

In a few instances, this violence led to murder — the shooting of Joseph Standing in Georgia in 1879, and the killing of William S. Berry, John H. Gibbs, Martin Condor and James R. Hutson in Tennessee in 1884.

Three other violent deaths of Church members in the South possibly should be mentioned in the list of martyrs, for their attackers probably were motivated in part, at least, by anti-Mormon prejudice.

The three men were Alma P. Richards, a missionary; George P. Canova, president of the Sanderson Branch of the Florida Conference, and John Dempsey, a member of the Church in Eugene, W. Va.

Elder Richards mysteriously disappeared while traveling alone in Mississippi. A search by the mission president and other missionaries led to the discovery of his grave. He had been buried as an unidentified victim of foul play after his body was discovered on the railroad tracks near Meridian, Mississippi, on August 2, 1888.

Elder Canova was shot from ambush while returning home at night from a branch conference. With him was a missionary, Thaddeus Hill, who was also fired on, but escaped. *(Note: Fact is that Thaddius Hill was a brother-in-law to Elder Canova and the two were returning from a conference of the church approximately 20 miles away, from their homes in Sanderson) Record that Thaddeus Hill reported he was fired upon has not been located. LMS.* He escaped through the woods while Geo. P. Canova took six bullets in his body. The two men had stopped their buggy to allow Elder Hill to get down and open a gate when the attack occurred. Two or three assailants were involved. *(Note: believed to be involved).* Elder Canova was a substantial citizen of his community being a businessman and a member of the county board of commissioners. Dying at the age of 56, he left a wife and 12 children. The identity of his attacker was established. His neighbor, Thomas Clark was very bitter in his opposition to the Church. *(Note: No mention of 'Thomas Clark' has appeared in any other accounts I've researched of Elder Canova's death including Baker County or Duval County newspaper and court records. Those records stated that three of his neighbors, William Rigdon and his two grown sons, George and Willie were arrested and jailed, but were never proven guilty of the crime — lms).* The Church News further states that Thomas Clark states, 'If Mormon Elders were treated as they should be, they would be ridden on rails out of the country'. An

apparently minor provocation was all the excuse he needed to take the life of his Mormon neighbor. End of article. *(Note: No mention of Thomas Clark is mentioned in any research by me of this martyrdom except for this Church News article) LMS. See Canova section for account.*

## Progress Of Work In The Southern States Mission From June, 1898 To September 1908.

(Source published in program on occasion of President Ben E. Rich's release from the Presidency of the Southern States Mission held in Atlanta, Ga. Friday evening, September 11, 1908.)

Books of Mormon sold . . . . .	25,000
Orson Pratt's Works sold . . . . .	15,000
Voice of Warnings sold . . . . .	160,000
Mr. Durant's sold . . . . .	150,000
Miscellaneous Books sold . . . . .	40,000
Gospel Tracts distributed . . . . .	3,500,000
Hymn Books sold . . . . .	25,000
Baptisms . . . . .	6,800

On January 31 Charles A. Callis and his family left for Salt Lake City

## Union Meetings Remembered By Vella Valentine Tilton Of San Mateo, Florida

When Le Grand Richards became president of the Southern States Mission he saw a great need to develop leadership among the local members of the Church.

Six months after arriving in Atlanta, he organized a three-day Leadership convention in Jacksonville. Later he established monthly leadership meetings in each District. These were referred to as Union meetings. Florida had two Districts: Florida and West Florida. Florida District extended from Georgia on the north to the Keys on the south. The area designated as West Florida extended to the west and was called 'the Panhandle'. Union meetings were held alternate months in Tampa and San Mateo often making transportation a challenge for not everyone had a car.

Just to illustrate, I will share with you one such challenge and experience. When Florida was made a District in 1937 with local people in charge of leadership positions, James R. Boone, the District president, was responsible for conducting Union meetings. I was the District Primary Superintendent. Neither of us were married at the time of this event.

President Boone was employed with a vacuum cleaner corporation. The company had scheduled a banquet for their employees and dates to be held on the roof-



garden of the Mayflower Hotel in downtown Jacksonville. He had been corresponding with a young lady, rich in pioneer Church heritage, who lived in Snowflake, Arizona, but when the banquet came up he needed a date and he asked me if I would go with him. I had been dating two young men active in the Church locally, but I accepted his invitation because I felt it a great honor to go any where with such a wonderful person like President Boone. Little did I know of the experience that awaited me, that our date would last all night and all the next day.

There was one problem that faced both of us. We had to be in Tampa for a Union meeting the next day. President Boone checked the train schedule and found that there was a train leaving Jacksonville for Tampa about the time he thought the banquet would be over. It was decided that we would attend the banquet and at a designated time one of my relatives would meet us and drive us to the train station to catch the train for Tampa in ample time for the Union meeting.

We had a lovely dinner and enjoyed visiting. Then the after-dinner speaker began his talk and he droned on and on and on. We checked our watches and saw the hands moving closer and closer to the train departure time. President Boone didn't want to get up and leave until the speaker had finished his talk for fear of offending his employer. Finally the elevator door, that opened into the banquet room, opened and there stood my Uncle Nathan motioning for us to come. President Boone looked at Uncle Nathan, looked at the speaker, looked at his watch, and still sat there. Finally the speaker ran out of steam and sat down. We rushed to the elevator, down to the street and into the car. By the time we arrived at the train station we saw the tail-lights on the train going down the track.

We checked the schedule and found that another train was leaving that would not go to Tampa, but at least going in that direction with an interchange to Tampa. We decided to board it.

President Boone helped me get seated, put my small overnight bag on the rack over head and then headed to the next car to occupy a seat there. Always the polite, proper gentleman that he was, he didn't want to give one impression of the appearance of wrong doing.

After he had gone, I went to the rest room and changed from my best dress, a beige knit with embroidered flowers that I had worn to the banquet, into a light dimity. I needed to keep my nice dress for the meeting the next day. Then I curled up on the seat and went to sleep.

Just before dawn I awakened and found we were stopping at a spot in the woods called Trilby. This was as close as this train would get to Tampa. We descended

from the train and checked at the small station house where the station master told us another train would be along 'after awhile' that would take us to Tampa. He left us alone and went home.

Well, there we were in the Trilby woods watching the pigs root and the chickens scratch. President Boone kept watching the time, wondering if he would reach Tampa in time for the meeting. Finally, he decided he would walk to the highway which was within our sight, and hope to catch a ride with someone going to Tampa. In just a short time a truck stopped, and he got in. Now I was alone, in the woods in Trilby, just me, the hogs and the chickens.

After awhile the train master appeared again and said the train to Tampa would be along soon. Finally I was seated on it, listening to the clickety-clack of its wheels heading toward Tampa. When I stepped off the train, a young man was there to meet me. President Boone had told him I would be coming in on one of the incoming trains, and he had met every one. President Boone had made his meeting on time and made sure I was met at the station so I could get to mine!

The Primary meeting was still hours away, so I had the young man drop me off at a hotel so I could freshen up and change back to my pretty beige knit dress. He returned for me later and I arrived in time to conduct the Primary meetings with all the sweet sisters who had gathered from around the District.

Thus ended my date with President Boone. It was a great adventure. Through all of our time together I remember only one thing we talked about. He asked me how many children I wanted to have when I married. I don't recall my answer, but I'm sure it wasn't enough for he never asked me out again. In a few months he married the wonderful woman with a pioneer heritage from Snowflake, Arizona, Ruth Flake, and they became the parents of 14 children. That same month, I married the same young man who met my train that day, Woody Tilton, from San Mateo.

## Sanderson Diary

*The following diary/journal record was first located by the late A.L. Ferreira, of Macclenny, in the 1970's. He was given permission, by the possessor, to make a copy of the original book. He also obtained permission for me to personally take the book to the Florida State Archives in Tallahassee for the proper treatment in preservation of the delicate pages. It was then returned to the owner whose name is withheld by request. The difficult handwritten manuscript has been transcribed by Sabina J. Murray, of Jacksonville, Florida, who is an expert in old handwriting. She has left the spelling as found in the original work. In a few instances the symbol (sic) was added for clarification of the spelling and meaning of the word. The record begins in 1898, and is evident in many entries that the events were recorded by the Sanderson Branch Secretary. Note:*

*Southern States Mission records state a Sunday School was organized in Sanderson, July 6, 1897, by Elders Frank H. Cutler and Jabez Faux. H.L. Wester as Supt. and G.R. Blair, Ass't Supt. Sanderson Branch was listed as being organized September 10, 1897, with Pres. Frank H. Cutler and Elder Jabez Faux, Jr., with Bro. Henry Wester as Presiding Priest. (Data contained in a letter from Ronald G. Watt, Archivist, Sr. Historical Department, LDS Church dated August 22, 1996.) (A Sunday School reorganized by Elders on Oct 3, 1909 is said to have been first organized May 28, 1906. (Sou. States. Mission Index Record). It was reorganized again by President D.A. Tidwell and Elder R. Ray Nixon at a branch conference May 28, 1915 SSMIR).*

The date of the following activity in the Sanderson Branch is verified by the records kept by Elias S. Kimball, President of the Southern States Mission. The notation that this was the first conference held in Florida, and the first time Florida had seen a living apostle in this dispensation: Also attending were Elders Francis M. Lyman and Mathias F. Cowley members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

[Page 1]

**Sanderson, Baker County, Fla. January 3rd, 1898**

Today, assisted by Elder Matthias, F. Cowley, Prest. Elias S. Kimball, and I ordained Henry L. Wester an Elder and set him apart to superintend the Sanderson Sunday School. Francis M. Lyman

[Page 2]

**Letter received March 26, 1898**

Mormon Elders, Sanderson, Florida March, 1898  
We have notified you dam rascals once to vacate this county and you haven't done so. Now you infernal dead beats let this be the last time. We will give you all until Monday, March 28th and if you polygamous villians are not gone by that night, we committee of 8 will go to

Sanderson sometime and cow hide every one of you especially a certain man that is encouragin and feeding you dogs. Now Remember this will be your last notice. Signed by Committee.

[Page 3]

To Whom It May Concern

This certifies that Bro. W.D. Mann was ordained an Elder in the Sanderson Branch of the Church on Sunday, June 12th, 1898.

[Pages 5 and 6 not found in book]

[Page 7]

**Sanderson, Fla. Sept 10th, 1898**

President Frank H. Cutler and Elder Jabez Faux Jr. met according to appointment with the Saints living in and about Sanderson, Baker County, Fla and organized them into a branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Brother Henry L. Wester was ordained a priest and set apart as president of the branch Elder J. Faux being mouth. Brother W.D. Mann was chosen and sustained clerk of the Branch: Sacrament was administered and Saints taught concerning it. This is known as the Sanderson Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Elder Jabez Faux Jr. secy. Pro T....(Note above dates of 1897 given in SSMR and Index stating earlier Branch organization for Sanderson)

[Page 8]

**Sanderson, Florida. Saturday, Jan 1, 1898**

The forty-two traveling Elders, Saints, and friends of the Florida Conference met in general conference capacity at this place. On the stand were Elders Francis M. Lyman and Matthias F. Cowley of the Quorum of the twelve apostles. Pres. Elias S. Kimball and wife of the Southern States Mission and Elder Chris J. Brown besides the traveling Elders of the Florida Conference. Prest. Frank H. Cutler presided. Services began with singing the hymn "How Swift the Months". Prayer by Elder John Z. Brown. Singing: "Now let Us Rejoice". Prest. Cutler reported conditions of Florida Conference. Testimonies born by the following Elders John Z. Brown, C.L. Black, L.A. Stevenson, Elias A. Gee, L.W. Robbins, W.G. Fisher and Apostle F.M. Lyman. The latter spake at great length upon the motives, labor, and success of the Latter-day Saints. He said Florida is Zion as well as Utah which is now headquarters, but Missouri will yet be the center Stake of Zion. Singing: "Come All Ye Sons of God". Benediction by Elder Samuel Isom. A nice dinner was served on the grounds and all ate freely in spite of the fact that the day was extremely cold. At 2 p.m. Pres. Cutler announced meeting time. The hymn "Come O Thou Kings of Kings" was sung. Prayer by E.B. Lewis.

[Page 10]

Singing: "Inspirer of the Ancient Seers", page 55.



Speakers: Elders Samuel Isom, Wm Criddle, John Watts, A.G. Sedgwick. A.B. Snowball, Wiley Nebeker, H.C. Blood, E.B. Lewis and E.J. Butterfield. Apostle M. Cowley then addressed the congregation at great length on the Atonement. Singing: "We Thank Thee O God for a Propet (sic)". Benediction Elder Jabez Faux, Jr.  
**Sunday, January 2, 1898**

Met again at Arbor Day—cold. Held one long meeting. Prest. Cutler presiding. Singing: "What was Witnessed". Prayer by Elder L.C. Stevenson. Singing: "Ye Elders of Israel". The whole time was occupied by the visiting authorities as follows. Elder Chris J. Brown he expressed himself as [Page 11] well pleased to be in our midst. Again testified of truthfulness of the Gospel. Prest. Elias S. Kimball preached a powerful sermon on the Divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Quartette, "Come Where the Lilies Bloom", was sung by the Misses Canova and Elder Jabez Faux Jr. and John Z. Brown. Elder M.F. Cowley continued in the same line as the former speaker. Referred to the fullment (sic) of many of the Prophecies of Joseph Smith especially the one on War recorded Section 87 of the D&C. Choir sang "An Angle (sic) from on High". Elder F.M. Lyman in a discourse made plain the fact that all powers and authority necessary [Page 12] were given to the Prophet Joseph Smith and he in time bestowed them upon the Twelve. Meeting closed by singing "Praise To the Man". Benediction by Elder Elias S. Kimball and our conference adjourned.

**Monday, January 3, 1898**

The General Priesthood meeting of the Elders and visiting authorities was held where Brother Henry L. Wester was honorably released as presiding Priest of the Sanderson Branch. Brother Geo. P. Canova was ordained as Elder by Apostle Francis M. Lyman and set apart to preside as the Sanderson Branch of the Church. Brother Henry L. Wester was ordained an Elder by Apostle [page 13] Francis M. Lyman and set apart as superintendent of the Sanderson Sunday School. These Brethren were sustained in their positions by Elders assembled. J.Z. Brown, Sect.

**Sunday, Jan 9, 1898**

A meeting of the Sanderson Branch was held in the Lodge Building. Brother G.P. Canova presided. Singing. Prayer by Elder John Z. Brown. Singing. Sacrament administered by Elders John Z. Brown and R.M. Robinson. Each occupied a part of the time.

**Sunday, Jan 17, 1898**

The Branch met in capacity of a testimony meeting. Brother G.P. Canova presiding. Singing. Prayer by Elder John Z. Brown. Singing. Prest. Cutler explained [page 14] the object of testimony meeting. The time was given into the hands of the Saints most of whom arose

and expressed their feelings. Visiting Elders spoke.

Singing. Benediction: Elder John Z. Brown.

**Sunday, February 6, 1898**

Saints meeting. Brother G.P. Canova presiding. Meeting was held in Brother Canova's parlor as it was too cold to meet in Lodge building. Singing page 195. Prayer by Elder John Z. Brown. Singing page 266. Prest. Frank H. Cutler and Elder John Z. Brown were in attendance. Sacrament was administered by Elders Brown and Cutler. Testimonies by the following: F.H. Cutler, G.P. Canova, John Z. Brown, Anna Canova, [page 15], H.L. Wester, Emily Godwin, James R. Terrel, Nancy Padgett. Sang hymn page 40. Prest. Cutler offered prayer again. Sang hymn page 198. Elders John Z. Brown and Frank H. Cutler spoke at great length upon the Gospel and Revelations. Sang hymn page 325. Elder John Z. Brown dismissed the meeting by prayer. [Page 16]

**Sanderson, Baker County, Fl. April (sic) 11, 1898**

Last Thursday Evening just as the sun was setting, Daniel Shaw a well-to-do farmer living 7 miles south of Sanderson was foully murdered while plowing in his field. About the above stated time Mrs. Shaw's family heard the report of a gun and a little later Kiah Shaw, son of deceased, went to investigate the shooting and found his father lying in the fence corner dead. He had been shot through the left temple and also the heart. The gun had evidently been placed against the body as deceased's shirt bosom was burned when found by his son. It was stated on good authority [page 17] that while the friends of deceased were sitting up with the body a certain neighbor approached the body and stepped upon the feet of the dead man and stood there until others interfered and took the coward away. Justice of the Peace, E.E. Pons as Ex-officio Coroner and constable Marshall Johnson arrived on the scene at noon the following day and proceeded to hold an inquest. The following jury were summoned. Enoch Roberts, foreman, Jno. Stafford, J.T. Wilson, Wm Kersey, Jno and Sam Crews. After viewing the body and hearing the evidence the usual verdict of death at the hands of unknown parties was rendered. [pages 18,19 not found]. [Page 20 *Resumes after the death of George P. Canova*]

**Mormonism in West Florida. August 24, 1898**

The Mormons or Latter-day Saints are making considerable inroads in Florida. They have more converts than many of our people are aware of among the illiterate. The only class (Class) they attack as a rule. They flood the country with their literature and it is strange that our papers do not expose this damnable heresy. In the last two months I have been over much of the West Florida association as its Evangelist. I have found in every



neighborhood adherents of Mormonism mostly amongst men. So far as I could learn only a few silly women had been carried away with the doctrine. And sad to say, I found a few Baptist who were willing to allow them to come into their homes. All such I refer them to Eph 4 Chapt 14 ver., Matthew 15:16, Gal. 1....(illegible) Thess 5:21, 1 John 4:1. [Page 21] Mormonism was founded by Joseph Smith who was born in Vermont in 1801. He first established this doctrine at Manchester, N.Y. in 1830 and in 1831 he removed with a few followers to Kirkland, Ohio, from which place they fled in 1838 to Missouri. They fled the next year to Nauvoo, Illinois, from this place they were driven in 1845. Smith who was in jail under indictment for Grand larceny, was killed by a mob. Wherever they had located, it was their practice to seize all property belonging to Gentiles. They called it 'Laying on of Hands'. They taught it was doing God a service to seize Gentile goods hence their short stay at each place and their leaders untimely death in 1847. Brigham Young, Smith's successor succeeded in establishing the remnant of Smith's....[Pages 22 and 23] followers in Utah, Their doctrines are founded are the alleged teachings of an imaginary prophet called Mormon, whom they claim was a Hebrew of the tribe of Naphtali. They claim that Mormon came to America, B.C. 600 and Joe Smith claims to have found his Book and plate buried in Ontario Co., N.Y., but it turned out to be the work of Rev. Solomon Spaulding who had written an imaginary history to prove that the American Indians were the ten lost tribes of the children of Israel. The book was a fiction and was so regarded by all intelligent people. The Mormons teach that God had a fleshly body and has many wives and the more wives his followers have, the more like God they become. In 1850 the most dastardly crime was committed by them that has ever blackened the history of any nation. The mountain meadow massacre. After many indictments when the head of the Mormon Church was about to be proven the chief agent in the diabolical plot, they consented to give up John Doyle Lee as the scape-goat. Lee was one of the twelve apostles of Mormonism. He acknowledge that he took part in the fiendish work, but only acted under orders from his superior officers. Think of fifty-two families being plondred and murdered in the name of the Latter-day Saints a crime at which the devil himself would blush and now to think that such sneak thieves are traveling our southland sowing such doctrines. While our religious papers are discussing some sickly matter and Mormonism [Page 24]...is left to drift amongst our weak Brethren. Raise the flag against Mormonism and never fail to fight this evil. Lee was tried before the United States court and at his own preference was shot. When everybody knew that Brigham

Young was just as guilty as Lee. All such vile tramps would be driven out of our country. They are just as vile now as they were in former days. Hundreds of travelers have been traced to Salt Lake City and have been there lost. There is no question but that they have been murdered and robbed and the Latter-day Saints have covered up there guilt. Such is Mormonism. If polygamy was their worst crime some plea might be made for them, but they [page 25] are also guilty of murder, robbery, rape and every other black crime known to demons. There is no reason why they should be allowed to traverse any Christian community. As soon as they come to any place, due and timely notice should be given them to forth with depart. I know of some places where they have been accommodated to a ride on a rail years ago and they have never been seen in those parts again. Only the most ignorant people can be imposed upon by them, and a little instruction by our pastors and a few timely articles from our papers would do much toward freeing the Baptist people from this blight. Benjamin Urton, Chipley, Aug 15

[Page 26]

Trenton, Fla. August 24, 98

Mr. Henry Wester, Sanderson, Fla.

Dear Sir,

I received an order from Elder Black for some books at your place but the books is Voice of Warning which is not the books I wanted. I had one of the Book of Mormon which I am well pleased with and I wanted to get a few more to loan to my neighbors to read that would read them, but they are some so prejudice they won't read or hear them read, etc. Do you know of any one in your vicinity that have been restored and healed of their ailments or infirmities by the Power of the Lord through any of the Elders. If so will you please write me which one of the [page 27] Elders who did who on and their names and addresses and the trouble they was restored from etc. Such information will be greatly appreciated and will be esteemed as quiet a favor. Yours truly, J.R. Smith. Trenton, Fla.

P.S. Why I wish such information that I may remove the prejudice from a great many that say that they would go and hear them preach if they knew of the fact that they had the power to restore the lame and the sick. etc. Yours Truly, J.R.S.

[Page 28]

Sanderson, Fla. Oct 13, 1898 J.R. Smith. Trenton, Fla.

Dear friend, Yours of August 24th at hand I take pleasure in answering the same though quite tardy in doing so. I will give you the address of the Southern States Mission in Chattanooga, Tenn. Address is: Ben E. Rich, P.O. Box 103. Then you will be able to receive the

information you desire also get all kinds of Church works. Your letter contained an enquiry of some of God's power made manifest through His servants(sic), the Elders. This is something we do not publish to the world for experience has taught us that very little good comes by so doing for you to locate or tell your friends of [page 29] these things would not strengthen their faith for faith does not come by signs but to the contrary. Signs come by faith, see Mark the 16th Chapter 14 verse to end of chapt. This will make things clear to your understanding. In Mark the 7th chap Christ heals the deaf. He charges them to tell no man. Many other places he also charges them who he healed to tell no one. Signs and healings have caused much persecution because faith comes by learning the Word of God through faith comes the power of God. Now allow me to refer you to the 11th chapter of John where Christ raised Lazarus from the dead but little good was done in reading from 43 paragraph to the end of the chapter. You will learn the out come of that [page 30] act Christ was unable to go openly among the Jews for they sought to put him to death. Now dear friend, I wish to be clearly understood in this matter then blessings are for the faithful and can say they are enjoyed by the saints of God and the household of faith today as they were enjoyed by the followers of Christ and the Apostles. I would admonish you dear friends to investigate the Gospel and obtain a clear understanding of the same. That gospel taught by Peter in Acts 2 chapter 36 to 40 verse. I will refer you to James 1 chapter 56 verse. You will admit we all lack wisdom then we should pray to God always. May you gain a testimony of the truth and embrace the same [page 31] is my prayers and I ask it in the name of Jesus. Believe me I am your friend and brother. Henry L. Wester, Sanderson, Florida.

[Page 32]

Mrs. George P. Canova, Sanderson, Fla.

Dear Madam,

I feel as if I must write to you on the subject of Mormonism. The Elders first preached to Georgetown in February last. Elders Isom and Olsen probably you have met them. I think Elder Isom is acquainted with your family because when we asked him to baptize us he said that Mr. Canova and his family were members of their church. If we had only knew then what we know now a Mormon Elder never would of led us in the waters of baptism. We must say that it is the most subtle system of religion ever gotten up. [Page 33]. The Elders are simply going about deceiving the people. But if anyone will just get the Book of Doctrine and Covenants and read it they will see clearly for themselves that the whole of it is nothing more than man made religion and that the lowest and debasing ever invented. The revela-

tion on plural marriage is just horrible. It is a new and everlasting covenant so it reads and all the Mormon Church is working for is power to practice it publicly as they did before the government put a stop to it. We have a paper The Kinsman printed in Utah an anti-mormon paper sent to us by a friend. I will mail it to you. It gives some information on [page 34] the Mormon subject. According to the paper, polygamy is practiced yet but not so publicly. Of course if they believe Joseph Smith to be a prophet they cannot deny the revelation and if they live up to their religion they must practice plural marriage secretly if they cannot publicly. Only think if the Mormons had power where would we be. We would not have no more showing in the world than the slaves of the past. I know there never was nor never will be a woman that would consent for her husband to take another wife, but they are taught if they do not consent they will be destroyed saith the Lord. We do not believe God ever [page 35] give any such revelation if so he is changeable for the nineteenth chapter of Matthew settles the marriage question. We have a book written by a Mormon wife and mother. She writes in favor of it. It is just sickening to read it but I do not think it suited her exactly. I think she was compelled by the Church to write in favor of it. The Elders openly admit that polygamy is to prevent adultery and Elder Stevenson had the audacity to ask me if I had a daughter which would I rather her do, marry a polygamist or go to a house of ill fame said if a woman did not marry she could not live a virtuous life. Now what do you think of that? It is a sin how they teach the women of Utah and compel [page 36] them to submit to their lustful plans and right now I do believe if they could get a man's wife in the notion to go to Utah with them I think they would take her right along for the women are all they are after and power to rule the government. They are ravening wolves in sheep's clothing seeking to devour any happy home that they can but be done with them. They believe there are many Gods, believe God is a polygamist, and Jesus Christ also was a polygamist when he was on the earth. We do not. I think some of the young Elders are ignorant of what they are doing but such as Elder Iom knows better but are working for some [page 37] high office in the Church. The very morning we were baptized I mentioned something to Elder Isom about the plural wife system and he said since he can remember they never had but two wives and that was with the consent of the first one, but he took good care and did not say under what condition she had to consent. I must say he certainly is a deceiver if I only had have the revelation then I would have told him just what I thought of the whole of them. We did not know then Joseph Smith had a revelation on plural marriage but when we got the Doctrine



and Covenants and read it we had no further use for Mormonism, and I think if all true men and [page 38] women will read that book and then embrace their religion I do not see how they can with an honest heart. Sometimes it almost breaks my heart to think how the women of Utah must have suffered under that tormenting system and are still suffering. We think they would be dealt justly with if every Mormon leader were strung up by the neck. If I could see you I could say more but I cannot write it all. Waiting anxiously for a reply. I will close. Yours truly,

Mr. D.B. Turner, Georgetown, Fla. October the third 1898.

[Page 39]

Sanderson, Florida. October 15, 1898

Mr. D.B. Turner, Georgetown, Fla.

Dear Sir, having received your letter of Oct the 3rd., I will endeavor to reply with a prayerful heart also with charity toward all concerned and especially to yourself. I commence by saying I feel as if I must write you upon the subject of Mormonism which I would be pleased to have you do as Mormonism as the world terms it is to teach righteous principles and do good to all men then you tell me about the Elders preaching in your neighborhood and you asking them to baptize you making the assertion later that if you had knew then what you do [page 40] now, you would not have done so, but give me no reason why only make the assertion that it is the most subtile(sic) system of religion ever gotten up. I would like to know how it is subtile(sic). The Elders teach the people to be kind, charitable, benevolent, to do good to all men, to be prayerful and to follow in the steps of the Savior Jesus Christ in every particular proving every principle from the Bible and they do not so much as ask the people to join the Church which they represent as you have acknowledged that you ask them to baptize you. Then where are they subtile(sic)? Again you say the Elders are going about deceiving, but you bring no proof how they are deceiving. That [page 41] is the way the Jews done with Christ, made many accusations but could prove nothing. Again you tell me to get the Doctrine and Covenants. Why? I have read that book. I know all about it. Anyone that wants to read it can get one by sending for it. You will find them advertised for sale in the back part of the Voice of Warning. You say it is a man made religion and the lowest and debasing every invented. The Elders teach the mission of the Savior and are continually pleading with the people to live lives of righteousness and follow in the steps of Jesus Christ if that is low and debasing I cannot understand the New Testament. In reference to the Revelation upon [page 42] plural marriage, if you will read Gen. 35, chap 23 to 26 verses, Gen 16 chap, 3 verse you will find

Abraham and five wives, Jacob had four wives by which he had 12 sons. If you will read in Matthew 8 chap, 10 vs. and Luke 13, chap 28 vs., you will see that Abraham and Jacob are in the kingdom of Heaven. Again in 11 Samuel 12 chap, 8 to 11 vs. you will see the Lord gave David his wives and in 1 Kings 15 chap 3rd vs., that David done that which was right in the sight of the Lord, only in the case of Uriah. In Galatians 5 chap 19–21 vs. you will see that those who commit adultery, murder are idolaters and such like shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. So then the Lord must not have looked upon Abraham and Jacob as Adultery(sic) as they are in the Kingdom of Heaven.

[page 43] Do you want to go to a better place than Heaven? But let that be as it may. The Elders do not teach this principle, neither do they practice it and if those that have practiced it had done what was wrong in the sight of the Lord we are not responsible for that, but let us do our duty and keep ourselves unspotted from the world lest we be found among that class. Paul speaks of it in Gal 5 chap 19–21 vs, who shall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. They do not try to deny the revelation neither do they ask you to believe it but they believe in honoring and sustaining the law as their 12th Article of Faith reads. Therefore they can believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God without practicing polygamy secretly as you assert [page 44] they do, but let us be careful and let no man put asunder what God hath joined together as the 19th chap of St. Matthew tells us which you refer to in reference to the Kinsman the paper printed in Utah that amounts to nothing. If you go to the enemies of Jesus Christ and the courts of Rome you find most abominable things written of the Savior. You speak of God being changeable by giving such a revelation. I have proven to you that such was the case anciently. Who knows but what he might do such again as he tells us in Acts 3rd chap., 21 vs that there is to be a restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His Holy prophets since the world began. And in the [page 45] 19–20–21 vs. of the same chap. that the Heavens must receive Jesus Christ until the times of the restitution of all things. You accuse the Elders of wanting to take men's wives to Utah. Did they ever try to take yours? Did you ever know personally of them ever doing such a thing? I have heard them many times tell the Saints to live here and set an example to our neighbors by living righteous lives. Instead of encouraging them to stay here you say they want power to rule the government. That is nonsense in the extreme. Why there is more than three times as many people in New York City alone than there is Mormons in the world. Now Mr. Turner, do you remember reading in [page 46] Gal. 5 chap. 22–23 vs. that the fruits of the



spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance against such there is no law. Do you think you are in possession of that spirit when you call Elder Isom a deceiver and still you say you ask him to baptize you? If you did not understand all about the gospel was that his fault? If he has wronged you and you are in possession of the spirit of the Lord, will not that spirit of love prompt you to go to him as it is recorded in Matt, chap 23,25 and agree with this adversary. Instead of writing letters about your brother to his friends and again do you think you are in possession of [page 47] the Holy Spirit? When you say the Mormon leaders would be dealt justly with if they were strung up! Desiring to put men to death, whom you have never seen that have never said a word to you in their lives, and that you know nothing about only what is said by their enemies. Remember in Acts the 5 chapt. Gamaliel's advice to the accusers of Peter and John. He said if their words be of man it will come to naught, but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it. Now dear friend, I beseech you to take the advice of Gamaliel and cease to fight against the Church. Ask the Lord to forgive you for desiring to take men's lives that have never injured you in any way and get the [page 48] spirit of the Lord. Then you will see clearly to pull the mote out of thy brother's eye. Mrs. G.P.C.

### Opportunity

There are four things that never return, the spoken word, the sped arrow, the past life and the neglected opportunity. The last being my subject I have chosen to write on. Many people are with opportunity as the little children at the seashore they gather their little hands full of sand then [page 49] let the grains fall through one by one until they are all gone. We are now entering into a new year, many days and hours are to be spent. Many advantages of learning are going to present themselves before us. What are we to do? Shall we let them go down the stream of time, or shall we step forward, and embrace them, treasure them up in our minds, and become useful men and women in the every day walks of life, and especially in the Kingdom of God. Our great men have been the ones who have made use of all spare moments. [page 50] Many have climbed the ladder from obscurity to eminence, from sorrow to joy, from poverty to wealth, from sin to righteousness. Year by year we are advancing in knowledge, institutions of learning are being established in our midst, and I feel proud that we have had a Sunday School placed in our reach. It is an organization where we can learn of the character, attributes and perfection of Deity. Our Savior says it is life eternal to know God and His Son Jesus Christ. The prophet Joseph Smith once said that it is impossible for a man to

be saved in ignorance. Since our salvation depends on knowledge, it behooves us to improve every opportunity to gain the same, and it is gained only by studious investigation by prayer and obedience. May we all learn to spend our idle moments in usefulness that we all may grow in wisdom, knowledge, and faith, that we can gain that eternal glory to reign with God our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Jan 29, 1899

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### Annual Statistical and Financial Report of the Sanderson Sunday School, of the County of Baker and State of Florida for the Year ending Dec. 27, 1899.

No. of times school held during year	.48
No. of male officers and teachers	.4
No. female " " "	.4
Total no. of officers and teachers	.8
Average attendance of officers and teachers	.6
No. of male pupils	.18
No. of female pupils	.22
Total no. of pupils	.40
Average attendance of pupils	.26
Total no. of officers teachers and pupils	.48
Cash on hand at last report	
Total cash collected from all sources including [Page 53] nickel contributions	.18.03
Grand total collected	
Cash disbursed including nickel contributions handed to Stake Superintendent	.4.35
Cash in treasury	.3.40

1. Is your School graded in accordance with the treatise? *It is not.*
  2. Is your Sunday School organization complete? *It is not.*
  3. If not, what officers are lacking? *Librarian and assist. also 2nd. assist supt.*
  4. Have you a complete history recorded of your School organization? *Yes.*
  5. Have you the new Sunday School Hymn Book? *We have not.*
  6. Do you practice congregational singing? *We do.*
- [Page 54]
7. Are you using the new Sunday School Treatise? *We are not.*

### Ward Officers and full P.O. Address

Superintendent	.H.L. Wester, Sanderson, Fla.
1st Asst supt	.W.D. Mann
2nd " "	
Secretary	.Adaline Canova
Per (?)	.Effie Wester
Treasurer	.Kitty Canova
Librarian	

*NOTE: The journal/report at one time contained entries to page 108. The remaining pages, not reprinted here, contained two letters from unidentified people concerning the gospel: one for, one against. Other pages contained the genealogy of Elisha Greene family that will be found in the Greene/Canova/Hill sections of this book and the Roberts/Richardson/Jones genealogical dates. It is assumed the journal has been handed down in these families as the vital dates listed ended in the 1970s.*

*After the publication of this book, a copy of this journal, in its entirety, can be located in the Lake City Florida Stake Center Genealogical Library, Lake City, Florida.*

#### BAPTISMS IN BAKER COUNTY,

#### FLORIDA CONFERENCE REPORT IN 1897

(Baker County was in Columbia County at one time, however residents lived in present day location of Baker County.)

NAME	DATE
1. Daniel W. Manning, born 29th June 1877 in Columbia County, Fla. (His father was George W. Manning; mother was Jane Elizabeth Parret (Parrott). Baptized 5 April 1897 by John Watts at Sanderson. Confirmed by Frank H. Cutler.	
2. George P. Canova	8 Sept 1897 in Sanderson
3. Anna Greene	8 Sept 1897 in Sanderson
4. Adaline Canova	8 Sept 1897 in Sanderson
5. Kittie Canova	8 Sept 1897 in Sanderson
6.* Janie Elizabeth Manning	8 Sept 1897 in Sanderson

\*(Born 4 Apr 1836 at Wayne County, Ga.: Father Jno. Parret (John Parrott). Mother: Mittie Parret (Mittie Fatima Gibson Parrott) baptized 5 Apr 1897 in Sanderson by Jno. Watts.

Source: Historical Dept of LDS Church , SLC, Utah  
 Researched by Vella Valentine Tilton Oct 1995

#### FROM THE ELDERS' JOURNAL MAY 23, 1908

FROM: O.W. Hyde, President Jacksonville; 1324 Claude Street. Sister Nancy Wester of Sanderson died at her home March 27. She was an earnest and devoted Saint, who cherished the truth as a priceless gem. The

funeral services were conducted on the 28th by Elders LeRoy Pay and William Decker. Hosts of friends were present to pay their last respects to the departed.

---

#### OH WALK WITH ME

*Oh walk with me, in Harmony  
 In Hiram, Kirkland too  
 Meditate and contemplate  
 Old prophecies and new.  
 Oh walk with me in Old Nauvoo  
 Take me by the hand  
 Let's speak of things that happened  
 In this sacred land  
 Oh, God our Eternal Father  
 Let Thy Spirit please abide  
 As we walk along the way  
 Stay close and near our side  
 Cast Thy Spirit on us now  
 As we seek to know  
 Reveal to us the sacred things  
 Help our spirits grow.  
 Help us to do Thy will  
 On our sacred paths  
 We seek to know eternal things  
 That in our hearts will last  
 In sacred groves and temples old  
 Thy presence hath there dwelled  
 And revealed to man  
 Thy glorious plan  
 Oh how our hearts doth swell!  
 We'll sing of Thee and Thy great work  
 Of prophets old and new  
 Help us to understand Thy will  
 As we journey through.*

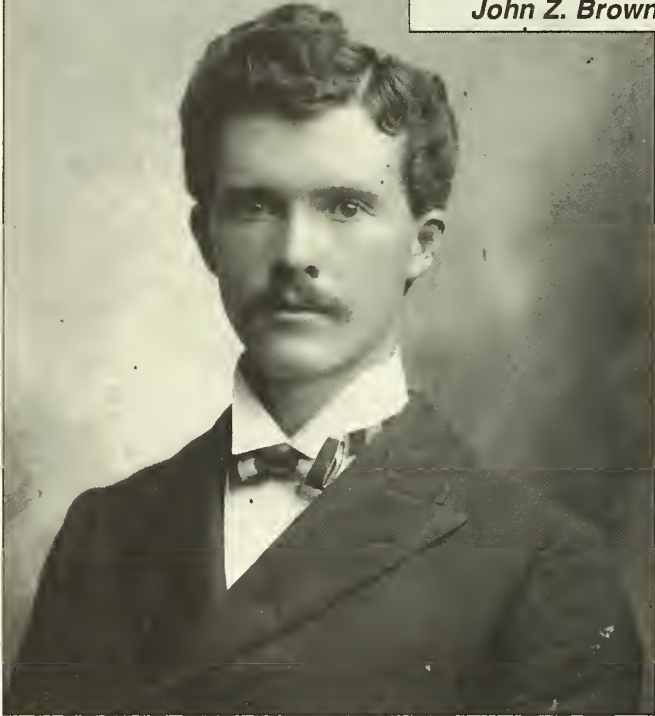
*La Viece M. Smallwood*

---



Elder Frank H. Cutler  
from Glendale, Utah  
1898  
(He became a physician)

*missionary Abner  
came a Medic*



Florida Conference Presidency—December 1, 1898  
John Z. Brown, R.M. Robinson, C.G. Parker

Alma Smith,  
President of Florida Conference  
January 2, 1916



Missionary Conference circa 1900, Jacksonville, Florida  
Elias Kimball, Mission President with white mustache, front row.

*at Confer-  
ence time  
Church of  
Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day  
Saints*

*missionaries & members - Elias Kimball, Mission President*



# FLORIDA CONFERENCE RECORDS

Compiled by JUDY T. URRY,  
of Salt Lake City, Utah,

Daughter of VELLA AND WOODY TILTON,  
Pioneer Saints From San Mateo, Florida,  
and from Other Various Church Record Sources.

*The records copied by Mrs. Urry of the baptisms were extremely difficult to read. She put her findings on cassette tape directly as she gleaned them from the records. From my personal experience in dealing with these records, I believe the original recorder, a native of the West, had difficulty in understanding the pronunciations of southern people. He either wrote it down as he thought he heard it, or he was careless in his spelling. In most cases the spellings, dates, places and events are recorded as found in the source from which they were transcribed. It is hoped that these records will lead the researcher to look for additional source records to verify and confirm the data gleaned here. They should be viewed with caution as other records reporting the same information varies in spellings, dates and places. In addition to baptism records, Ms. Urry recorded other records pertaining to the Florida Conference organized November 1, 1895. They are not listed in order of page number, therefore keeping all baptisms together. LMS*

## ORGANIZATION OF FLORIDA

**CONFERENCE:** *Letter in file from Elias Kimball to Jos. S. Geddes, then president of Southern Alabama Conference, pertaining to the Division of Southern Alabama Conference (not included). The organization took place November 1, 1895 with following officers and elders.*

Elder Joseph A. West, President

Elders E.L. Black and G.V. Nelson arrived Oct. 6, 1893; Released Dec 15, 1895.

Ephram Yeates arrived June 15, 1894; Rel Mar 27, 1896  
Orson A. Williams Arrival Dec 23, 1893; Rel Jan 3, 1896

W.F. Tanner, Jos. Larson (1894–97), John Watts, Frank Smith, T.F. Wasden, Chas. H. Gibson (1895–97), Frank H. Cutler, G.H. Rogers Nov 17, 1894–Apr 23, 1897, Wiley Nebeker, Amos Rogers Jan 12, 1895, G.A. Wootten. *[End of list of first Elders reported to have served in the South.]*

## CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

Regarding the Manuscript history of the Southern States Mission, the records show

November 1895. Under instructions from President Elias S. Kimball of the Southern States Mission, the South Alabama Conference was divided, and the Florida Conference was organized for the State of Florida. Elder Joseph A. West was appointed president of the new conference.

January 1, 1898. At the meetings of the Florida Conference, a change was made in the territory of the Florida Conference. All territory in Florida west of the Apalachicola River, embracing the counties of Jackson, Calhoun, Washington, Holmes, Walton, Santa Rosa, and Escambia were transferred to the South Alabama Conference.

June 13, 1898. In order to enlarge the field of labor in the Florida Conference, the following counties of Georgia were made part of the conference: Decatur, Thomas, Brooks, Lowndes, Echols, Clinch, Charlton, Camden, Glynn, Pierce, Ware, Coffee, Berrien, Colquitt, Mitchell, Baker, Miller and Early.

## FIRST RECORDS OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS ORGANIZED

May 15, 1895: Coe Mills: Elder Byran B. Copley and J.C. Jenson organized a Sabbath school at Coe Mills, Liberty Co., Fl. with Bro. J.A. Dugger, Supt. and Louisa Dugger, Secy.

June 28, 1896. Woodruff, five miles west of Live Oak in Suwannee County.

Aug 9, 1896. Westland in Hassellville, Jefferson County, Fl.: Pres. Jos. A. West, Elders C.J. Brown, T.F. Wasden and William Criddle. Given the name of Westland in honor of Pres. West.

Oct 26, 1896. Bristol in Liberty Co., Fl. known as Pleasant Hill: Pres. Frank H. Cutler, Elder Jaby Faux, Sunday School Superintendent, G.R. Blair, Ass't Supt., Will Cann, Treas., Daniel Green, Lib, G.R. Blair, theologian teacher, Bertha Smith, Intermediate teacher, Americus Cobb, Primary teacher.

July 6, 1897. Sanderson: Pres. Frank H. Cutler and Jabez Faux organized a Sabbath School at Sanderson, Baker County, Florida, with H.L. Wester, Supt. and G.R. Blair, Ass't. Supt.

July 25, 1897. Elders L.W. Lund and L.R. Lewis met with the Saints and friends of New Zion in Bradford County, Fl. and organized a Sunday School. Officers and teachers are as follows: John Murphey, Supt., N. Dowling, Ass't Supt., John Keen, Jr., Sec't., John

Murphey, Theologian teacher, John Keen, Sr., Intermediate teacher, Lidia Beasley, John Keen, Primary teacher

August 29, 1897. Near Highland in Clay County. Organized with Elisha Noland, Supt., William Mosley, Ass't, J.M. Hatcher, Sec'y. Minnie Hatcher, Ass't Sec'y., and ass't primary teacher. Fannie Hatcher, primary teacher, William Coleman, theologian teacher, John Mosley, Ass't Lib., Laura Noland, lib., William Mosley, Intermediate teacher and J.M. Hatcher, Sec'y.

Sept 26, 1897. Cedar Grove: Brother J.B. Wright, and Elder L.A. Stevenson organized a Sunday School at Cedar Grove, with M.M. Raulerson as Supt. and J.B. Wright as Ass't. Supt. Post Office address is shown as Lake City, Fl.

Oct 17, 1897. Lake Bird Sunday School in Taylor County. B.J. Voyles and Supt. L.A. Stevenson met the Saints and friends of Lake Bird at the county line and organized a Sabbath School. Officers and teachers were sustained as follows: Supt. B.S. Rowell, ass't J.O. Chance, Sec'y M. Henderson, Lib. (?) McDaniel, theologian teachers J.O. Chance, B.S. Rowell, Primary teachers , Sis. Rowell, and McDaniel. Treas. Miss Rowell.

## BRANCHES ORGANIZED

May 9, 1897. Hassell Branch in Jefferson County, Fl.: Elders Edward L. Black, Chris L. Brown and James H. Allen organized a branch of the Church (Post Office address of Ashville) at Hassell in Jefferson County with 21 members. Brother Addison Hassell was chosen and sustained as Presiding Priest. (see end of entry for more detailed information on this organization).

September 10, 1897. Sanderson Branch in Baker County, Fl. Pres. Frank H. Cutler and Elder Jabez Faux, Jr., organized a branch of the Church at Sanderson, with Bro. Henry Wester as Presiding Priest. (Reorganized by Elders Oct 3, 1909. Reorganized again by President D.A. Tidwell and Elder R. Ray Nixon at a branch conference May 28, 1915.)

September 26, 1897. Bristol Branch in Liberty County, Fl.: Pres. Frank H. Cutler and Elder Jabez Faux, Jr. organized a branch of the Church at Bristol with Bro. Monroe Peddie as Presiding Priest.

October 10, 1897. Westville Branch in Holmes County: Organized by Prest. Frank H. Cutler, Elders Jabez Faux, Jr., John Watts and A.G. Sedgwick.

\*Branch organized at Hassellville had 21 members: Joseph Parker, Wm. Lindsey, Jessie Lindsey, Nancy Parker, Addison, Martha, Mary, Uriah, and Mattie Hassell, Sister T. (or F.) Huggins, Elizabeth Ivey, George and Nancy Huggins, Martha Stafford, Americus F. Barrington, Caroline Dewey, Benus Stafford, Dorothy (called Dolly) Merriman, Sarah Barrington, David and

William Butler. Geo. B. Stafford sustained as Teacher, David Butler as Priest, William Butler, a teacher.

NOTE OF INTEREST: From records of genealogist Aurora C. Shaw. David Butler was engaged to Lula Merriman and while climbing a fence on a hunting trip, accidentally shot himself and bled to death. Lula later married a Faglie. They reared five sons, most are active in Church, 10 miles from Monticello. Caroline Dewey was sister to Uriah, who was son of Addison Hassell. Official church records show this branch to have been organized in South Carolina, but according to Ms. Shaw, the branch was in Florida. Addison Hassell came to South Georgia, then to Jefferson County, Fl. The family was from North Carolina.

## RELIEF SOCIETY ORGANIZATION

Manuscript history of the Southern States Mission records:

June 2, 1897: A Relief Society was organized at Varnell Station, Georgia, but that was before the Florida Conference was organized, and a different location.

September 2, 1905: A Relief Society was organized at Blackshear, Pierce Co., Georgia, with Sister Elizabeth Henderson as president.

*This area of Georgia was within the Florida Conference in 1905. It is thought this could have been the earliest one organized within the conference according to mission manuscript history.*

March 17, 1907. A Relief Society was organized at Jacksonville, Florida, on Sunday of this date. Ref. also Florida Conference in the mission history index shows, April 15, 1907. Fl Conf. report mentions the organization at Jacksonville on Sunday, March 17, 1907.

May 5, 1913. A Relief Society was organized at Carrabell, Florida.

1924. Relief Society organized in Miami in home of Mrs. Ruby Robinson (Cameron), With Mary Padgett, President, Lizzie Turner, 1st. Coun., Lorena Russell, 2nd. Coun., and Nellie Cunningham, Sec'y.

## PRIMARY ORGANIZATION

No heading in the mission history index to 'Primary' as is for Relief Society, but the Jacksonville Branch, Florida heading shows this information:

May 30, 1908. A Primary was organized at Jacksonville, Florida, with about 20 children enrolled. Sister Orlene Hyde, daughter of President Oscar W. Hyde, was appointed president.

Some of the early Sunday Schools mention primary and intermediate teachers, but could have been Sunday School teachers for various age groups and not the Primary organization. References under 'Florida Conference' in the mission history index do not show



anything on Primary before 1908, so the Primary organized in Jacksonville is evidently the earliest one found. Manuscript history of Florida Conference shows nothing on Primary before 1908.

## YOUNG LADIES MIA AND YOUNG MENS MIA

References under the 'Jacksonville Branch, Florida' heading in the mission history index show:

**April 10, 1906.** A Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association was organized at Jacksonville, Fl., with Sister Mary O. Drumiler as president, and Mary V. Colby and Ella G. Roberts as counselors.

**October 31, 1906.** A Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association has been organized at this city (San Mateo) with Sister Carrie Tilton as president. No mention when the Young Men's MIA was organized but it was evidently functioning in April 1907.

A reference under Florida Conference in the mission history index shows April 15, 1907. Reports the MIA organizations of Jacksonville held a conjoint meeting on Easter Sunday and marked the close of the season's work of those associations. Nothing shown on MIA in Manuscript history of Florida conference before the 1906 organization in Jacksonville.

The Manuscript history of the Jacksonville Branch/Ward, shows both MIAs were organized in November 1908, but the mission manuscript history shows the 1906 and 1907 dates.

Following records were gathered by Judy Urry.

## OTHER ENTRIES IN RECORDS

**Statistical report of the Florida Conference for year ending Dec 31, 1895:** Priest 1, mbrs. 50, total officers and mbrs 51. Children under eight years, 11. Total souls 62. Children blessed 11, officers and members received 62. officers and mbrs removed, 1, Baptized 51 new members.

**May 30, 1896:** Minutes before conference assembled at Arbor, two miles west of Woodruff, Suwannee, Co., Fl., Saturday, May 30, 1896, meeting called to order by Pres. West, commenced with singing. Present Elias Kimball Pres. Sou States Mission, Present, 24 travelling Elders.

**May 5, 1897:** Neat Arbor built especially for occasion. Pres. Frank Cutler called meeting to order. Hymn sung was Florida composed by Elder Jos. A. West.

**Dec 1896:** President Frank Cutler succeeded Jos. West.

**Dec 1896:** Elders driven from Suwannee by a mob in Dec '96.

**Statistical report for Florida conference ending Dec. 31, 1896:** 28 priests, 10 deacons, 234 members, total officers and members 246. Children under eight years, 58. Total of souls 304. Baptized new members, 193. Children blessed, 58.

**Statistical report Florida Conference for year ending Dec 31, 1897:** Forty-two seventies, 20 priests, 2 teachers, 1 deacon. Mbrs. 500. Total officers and mbrs 523. Children under the age of eight years, 20. Total souls 543. Children blessed 223. Baptized new mbrs. 284. Families visited 1,141. Families revisited 11, 190. Tracts distributed 17, 879. Books disposed of 1,881. Meetings held 5, 246. Gospel conversations 19, 434.

## WASHING OF FEET AS A TESTIMONY AGAINST THOSE WHO REJECTED THE GOSPEL.

(Name of Elders, name and location of place and stream/branch of water where ordinance took place listed when given).

**BAKER COUNTY:** May 5, 1897. Elders John Watts and William Criddle (no place listed)

**CLAY COUNTY:** June 1, 1897. Elders John C. Brown, Brigham Haslem in Spring Branch

**JACKSONVILLE CITY:** June 24, 1897. Elders Frank H. Cutler and John C. Brown Yellow Water Creek in Clay County, Florida.

**BRADFORD COUNTY:** August 5, 1897. Elders L.W. Lund and I.F. Holtzclow. Olustie Creek.

**BAKER COUNTY:** August 5, 1897. Elders I.F. Holtzclow and Lafayette Dana. Olustee Creek

**COLUMBIA COUNTY:** August 25, 1897. Elders Lafayette Dana and L.W. Robbins. Mill Creek.

**HAMILTON COUNTY:** August 25, 1897. Elders W. Fred Tanner and Josf. Marsh in Mill Creek in Columbia County.

**COLUMBIA COUNTY:** September 2, 1897. Elders L.W. Robins and Josf. Marsh in Suwannee River

**COLUMBIA COUNTY:** September 17, 1897. Elders I.F. Holtzclow and R.B. Cutler in Gadsden County

**MADISON COUNTY:** September 30, 1897. Elders John Watts and Sadgwick. Held in Big Ocellie River in Jefferson County.

**JACKSONVILLE, FL.:** August 11, 1897. Elders John Z. Brown and W.G. Fisher. Held in McGirt's Creek

**THOMASVILLE, GA.:** November 20, 1897. Elders Jabez Fax, Jr. and John Z. Brown. Held in Suwannee River in Columbia County, Fl.



VALDOSTA, GA. : November 20, 1897. Elders W.G.  
Fisher and Samuel Isom. Held in Suwannee  
River in Columbia County

SUWANNEE COUNTY: May 6, 1897. Elders W.G.  
Fisher and C.J. Brown, no place listed.

FERNANDINA, FL.: December 22, 1897. Elders W.G.  
Fisher and H.C. Blood.

THOMAS CO., GA. : December 22, 1897. Elders W.J.  
Shakespeare and Lafayette Dana. Suwannee  
River in Madison Co., Fl.

NASSAU COUNTY, FL. : May 4, 1897. Elders H.C.  
Blood and H.C. Snowball.

NASSAU COUNTY, FL.: Oct 16, 1897. Elders H.C.  
Blood and W.J. Shakespeare

GAINESVILLE, FL. : July 14, 1897. Elders L.W.  
Robins and Samuel Isom

JACKSON COUNTY, FL.: Nov 17 1897 Elders L.W.  
Robins and Hyrum Marsom

CLAY COUNTY: Nov 27, 1897 Elders J. David Koons  
and H.P. Randall. Held in Alachua County,  
Florida.

BRADFORD COUNTY: Nov. 23, 1897. Elders L.R.  
Lewis and H.P. Randall. Held in Allegator Creek  
in Bradford County.

CAMDEN COUNTY, GA.: July 27, 1897. Elders Wiley  
Nebiker and H.P. Randall

TAYLOR COUNTY, FL: May 21, 1897. Elders A.G.  
Sedgwick and L.A. Stevensen. Held in Madison,  
Fl.

WALTON AND JACKSON COUNTY, FLORIDA:  
Jan 4, 1898. Elders L.W. Robins and Hyrum  
Marsom. Held in Baker County.

NASHVILLE, GA.: Jan 4, 1898. Elders Edward L.  
Black and James H. Allen. Held in Baker  
County, Fl.

## RECORDS OF MOBBINGS

Elder W.G. Fisher gives narrative of mobbings in  
Suwannee County, Fl. Dec 1896.

*(See that section for letter)*

L.A. Stevenson gives account of mobbing in Taylor  
County on morning of May 19, 1897. He said, "We  
were driven like dogs for 18 miles."

Spelling has been left as it appeared in record.

### INITIALS:

CCF = Columbia County Florida  
SS CCF = Suwannee Shoals Columbia County  
Florida  
SAA = Same as Above  
VSR CF = Violet, Santa Rosa County Florida  
B = Born

Bap = Baptised  
Dau = Daughter  
C = Child

[PAGE 145 RECORD OF MEMBERS FOR THE  
DISTRICT PART 1 #6717 IS AN OLD MISSION#  
REEL #2189 # CR 3758]

## BAPTISMS:

Jane Elizabeth Parrott Manning, dau of Jno Parrott and  
Mittie Parrott, b April 4, 1836 Wayne Co., Ga. Bap  
Apr 5, 1897 Sanderson, Baker County, Florida  
Daniel W. Manning, son of George Manning and Jane  
Elizabeth Parrot Manning, b June 29, 1876 in CCF Bap  
Apr 5, 1897.

George G. Keen, son of William K. Keen and Lidia  
Gillet, born May 4, 1827 Appleton, Fl. Bap Apr 24,  
1897 Corinth, Columbia County, Fl..

Cathrine Waldron, dau of Elias D. Waldron and  
Lovenia Wood, B (?) CCF Bap April 22, 1897 Benton  
CCF

George C. Kirkland, son of Irvin Kirkland and Syntha  
Coleman, B 1844 in Emanuel Co., Ga. Bap Apr 22,  
1897 Benton CCF

Nettie C. Kirkland, dau of David Hurst and Jayne  
Durrence, B Jan 31, 1872 in Echols, Ga. Bap April  
1897 Benton CCF

Alice Melton, dau of Irvine Kirkland and Syntha  
Coleman, b May 3, 1855 in Emanuel ,Ga. B. Apr 18,  
1897 Benton CCF.

Edith Register, dau of Gifford Register and Rebecca  
Avery, B Aug 7, 1874 in Clinch Co, Ga Bap Apr 18,  
1897 Benton CCF.

Lizzie Hines, dau of Hire Melton and Alice Kirkland,  
B Feb 5, 1876 in CCF Bap April 18, 1897 CCF

Louisa Uisa Melton, dau of Irvin and Syntha Coleman,  
B 1858 in Emanuel Co, Ga Bap April 18, 1897 CCF

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Nichband Raulerson, son of Nichband Raulerson and  
Tilta Bran, B Sept 25, 1870 CCF Bap Apr.24, 1897 in  
Lake City, CCF

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Louis Miles Murray, son of Miles Murray and  
Elizabeth Tyler, B Feb 7, 1855 in Applon, Ga. Bap Aug  
15, 1897 in Suwannee Shoals, CCF

Texas Murray, son of Tom Henry Newburn and Susan  
Roberts, B Sept 17, 1867 Brandford, Fl. Bap Aug 15,  
1897 SS CC

Victoria Fort, dau of Isaiah Fort and Elnora Baker, B  
Feb 13, 1858 Marion Co, Bap Aug 28, 1897 in Benton,  
CCF

Sarah Pennier, dau of Chas Wheeler and Jane Taylor, B 1827Applon, Ga. Bap Sept 7, 1897 CCF  
 Rebecca J. Register, dau of David Avery and Bertha Cook, B March 9, 1841 in Wilkinson, Ga. Bap Sept 7, 1897 Benton CCF  
 Sallie Register, dau of Gilford Register and Rebecca J. Avery, B June 19, 1881 CCF, b Sept 7, 1897 CCF  
 Louis William Hoyt, son of John George Hoyt and Elizabeth M, b Dec 2, 1856 in Germany Nuertenberg Bap Dec 19, 1897 in Lulu, CCF  
 Filene Hoyt, dau of John Roland and Diacy Alford, B Dec 20, 1864 in CCF. B Dec 19, 1897 Lulu CCF  
 Matilda Williams, dau of Daniel Beasley and Elizabeth Hall, b Sept 2, 1861 in Emannuel, Ga. Bap Dec 19, 1897 Lulu, CCF

[Page 19 ]

William Andrew Covell, son of Daniel Elbott Covell and Elizabeth Jane Tucker, b Oct 2, 1866 in Molber, S.C. b June 20, 1897 CCF by Elias A. Gee Conf. 25 June By Elder Gee.

[page 100–101] (Elders names for the Baptisms and Confirmations not included)

Mary A. Kesse, dau of Bythel H. Callahan and Nancy Godin, b Apr 25, 1867 in Holmes, Fl. bap May 27, 1888 in Holmes, Fl.

William Hannon, son of Wm Hannon and Adaline Peterson, b Feb 25, 1870 in Santa Rosa Co., bap May 9, 1892 in Holmes, Fl.

Dove Leavines, child of Elijah Leavines and Lydia French. B Nov 19, 1862 in Holmes, Fl. Bap Dec 3, 1892 in Holmes, Fl.

Sweet Leavines, same parents as above, b Dec 10, 1864 in Holmes. Bap Dec 3, 1892 in Holmes.

Jesstha Leavines, father not listed, mother Mary Leavines b Apr 9, 1880 Holmes Co, Fl. Bap Oct 15, 1893 Holmes Co., Fl.

Malisa Leavines, father not known, mother Mary Leavines b Oct 2, 1871 in Holmes Co bap Dec 3, 1892

Overetta Payne, child of Mack Register and Julia Ann Slay, b Dec 4, 1867, Washington Co., Fl. Bap Nov 5, same county as birth

Elizabeth Scott, dau of Samuel Curry and Epsy Scott b Mar 9, 1849 Tallepoosa, Ala. bap May 27, 1888 in Holmes Co., Fl.

Epsy Curry, dau of James Scott and Rebecca Norton b Feb 20, 1823, in Richmond, N.C. bap Dec 16, 1888 Holmes Co, Fl.

Mynery Roland, child of Christhopher Richardson and Clarrissa Kemp, born Nov 22, 1839 in Henry, Ala. bap Dec 16, 1888 in Holmes Co., Fl.

Challia Stanton, child of Geo. J. Stanton and Mary Fore, b Dec 28, 1858, Monroe, Ala., bap Dec 28, 1888.

Lydia Leavines, dau of Robert French and Eliz Levines, b Oct 2, 1822 in Ga. bap Dec 3, 1892 in Holmes Co., Fl.

Mary Leavines, dau of Elijah Leavines and Lydia French, b Aug 29, 1843 in Geneva, Al. bap Dec 3, 1892 in Holmes Co., Fl.

Elizabeth Danily, dau of Hosey Holley and Nancy M. Holley, b abt 1856 in Coffee Co., Al. bap Dec 12, 1892 Walton Co., Fl.

James M. Payne, son of Jos Payne and Millie J. Sharp, b 1863 in Covington, Al. Bap May 21, 1893 in Orangehill, Washington Co., Fl.

Readie Evans, child of Daniel Evans and Alncita Peacock, b Nov 6, 1849, in Geneva, Al. bap Aug 27, 1893 in Coe Mills, Washington Co., Fl.

Eliz M. Evans, dau of John McMillan and Eliz. F. Bagley, b Aug 1, 1842 in Putnam, Ga. bap Aug 27, 1893 in Orange Hill, Washington Co., Fl.

Jane Williams, dau of Wiley Cook and Annie Cruse, b Henry Co., Al. Bap Oct 3, 1893 in Calhoun Co., Fl.

Mary V. Williams, child of James Wood and Serena McDade, b Jan 15, 1855 in Calhoun, Fl. bap June 10, 1894 in Washington Co., Fl.

Bany A. Wood, child of Samuel J. Nixon and Bina Preacher, b mar 31, 1849 in Barabour, Al, bap July 1, 1894 in Calhoun, Fl.

Margarete Williams, child of Alix Morris and Nancy Mahoney, b June 8, 1872, bap July 1, 1894 in Calhoun, Fl.

John Williams, son of F.M. Williams and Jane Cook, b Oct 9, 1870 in Calhoun, Fl. bap July 1, 1894 in Calhoun, Fl.

Virginia Williams, dau of F.M. Williams and Jane Cook, b Apr 13, 1872 same as above

William E. Pitman, son of John T. Pitman and Eliza Philips, b Mar 6, 1823 in Early, Ga. bap Aug 2, 1894 in Calhoun Co, Fl.

Simon Duggar, son of Wm L. Duggar and Mary Futch, b Sept 29, 1829 in Thomas, Ga. bap Aug 2, 1894 in Liberty Co., Ga.

[page 104–5]

Mary A. Duggar, dau of John T. Pitman and Eliza Philips, b Dec 24, 1833 in Gadsden, Fl. bap Aug 2, 1894 Liberty Co., Fl.

Lousia Duggar, dau of Simon Duggar and Mary A. Pitman, b Mar 28, 1851 Liberty Co., Fl. bap Aug 2, 1894 in Liberty Co., Fl.

James A. Duggar, son of same as above, b May 5, 1872 in Liberty Co., Fl. same as above

James Norton, son of Rozz Norton and Serena Mc Dade, B May 17, 1849 in Calhoun, Fl. Bap Aug 2, 1894 Calhoun, Fl.



ALL FOLLOWING BAPTISMS WERE HELD IN  
1895 UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED

George W. Dannaly, son of James Dannaly and Nancy E. Brown, b Jan 11, 1851 in Covenington, Al. bap March 10, 1895 in Walton, Fl.

Nancy E. Dannaly, dau of Geo W. Dannaly and Bettie J. Holley, B Sept 25, 1883 in Geneva, Al bap same as above

Francis Gainer, son of Elijah Gainer and Eliz. Strickland, b May 3, 1870 in Geneva Co., Al. Bap Apr 28, 1895 same as above

James Johnson, son of Nathaniel Johnson and Ruthy J. Williams, b July 20, 1882 in Covenington, Al bap May 16, 1895 in Liberty Co., Fl.

Walter W. Johnson, son of Nathaniel and R.J. William, b Nov 28, 188(?) in Covington, Al, bap May 16, 1895 in Liberty Co., Fl. Excommunicated at own request. Sept 8, 1895.

Amanda E. Duggar, dau of Daniel Duggar and Louisa Kyle, b Sept 28, 1871 in Leon Co., Fl. bap May 16, 1895 in Liberty, Fl. Excommunicated at own request same date as above.

Eliz Kyle, dau of Christopher Kyle and Millbury Pitman, born Oct 10, 1848 in Gadsden, Co. Fl. bap. May 18, 1895 Liberty Co., Fl.

Mary C. Cortney, dau of Wm H. Parish and Martha Booth, b May 17, 1853, in Montgomery, Al. Bap July 29, 1895 Escambia Co., Fl.

Matthew Leavines, son of Richard Leavines and Tabitha Leavines, b Mar 4, 1848 in Walton, Fl. bap. Aug 7, 1895 in Escambia Co

Rufus Leavines, son of Elijah Leavines and Lydia French, b May 2, 1858 in Holmes, Co. Fl. bap Aug 18, 1895 same place

Margaret J. Leavines, dau of Noah Max and Charity Poster, b abt 1869 in Jackson Co., Fl bap Aug 18, 1895 Holmes Co., Fl.

Zacharah Nelson, son of Zacharah Nelson and Polly Wiggins, b May 23, 1848 in Walton, Fl. bap Sept 15, 1895 in Escambia Co.

John Williams, son of John Williams, mother Sina Melvina Bunch b Dec 27, 1844 in Calhoun, Fl. bap Oct 6, 1895 in Calhoun, Fl.

Francis Marin Williams, son of John Williams and Melvina Bunch, b Oct 3, 1841, Calhoun, bap Oct 6, 1895 Calhoun, Fl.

Thomas Jefferson Laumoor, son of Russell Laimoor and Mary Eliz Simms, b March 17, 1858 Holmes Co., bap Oct 6, 1895 Calhoun, Fl.

Mary Ann M. Laumoor, dau of Izer Carhunter Maurinzio Turner, born Aug 22, 1860 in Erben, Ga. bap Oct 6, 1896 Calhoun, Fl.

Merniva Ann Nelson, child of James Shufield and

Lucinda Faulk, born Sept 29, 1856, Santa Rosa, Fl. bap Oct 8, 1895

Miles Nelson, son of Joseph Nelson and Sarah Fowler, b July 19, 1825 in Walton Co., Fl. bap Nov 9, 1895 in Jackson Co., Fl

William E. Shepherd, son of James Shepherd and Nancy Simmons, born Aug 26, 1870 in McNarry, Tenn bap Mar 29, 1896 in Jefferson Co., Fl.

Robert Langly Humphries, son of Elijah Humphries and Fannie Collins, b mar 12, 1867 Montgomery, Ala., bap Dec 2, 1895 in Tallahassee, Leon, Fl.

Eliz Luithia Humphrey, dau of John Mattison Palmer and Martha Bates, b Dec 22, 1846 in Lowendes, Al. bap Dec 2, 1895 in Tallahassee Leon Co., Fl.

Thursain Kennedy, son of John C. Kennedy and Mily Ann Sophriona Barnes, b Oct 21, 1879 in Butler, Ala bap Jan 10, 1896 in Violet, Santa Rosa Co., Fl.

Mary Louisa Alabama Kennedy, dau of Jetitha J.

Dubose and Eliz Butts, b Oct 23, 1869 in Barbour, Al. bap Jan 10, 1896 in VSRCE

Beddy Kennedy, child of Jon C. Kennedy and Midy Ann Sophriona Barnes, b Mar 18, 1877 in Butler, Al. bap Jan 10, 1896 in VSRCE

Midy Ann Sophriona B. Kennedy, child of Calvin Barnes and Nack Key, b May 30, 1838 in Darling Dist, S.C. bap Jan 10, 1896 in VSRCE.

Joseph Parker, son of Ashford Parker and Rebecca Sapp, b Jan 25, 1838 in Madison Co., Fl. bap Feb 16, 1896 in Greenville, Madison Co., Fl.

Martha Stafford, dau of Jno. Flassha Stafford and Mary Harrod, b June 5, 1847 in Jefferson Co., Fl. March 8, 1896 in Greenville, Madison Co., Fl.

Nancy Parker, dau of Farmer Lee and Charlotte Eyers, b date not known in Marion Co., S.C. bap Mar 8, 1896 in Greenville, Madison Co., Fl.

Charles Revels, son of Owens Revels and Mary Hill, b May 8, 1869 in Lafayette Co., Fl. bap Mar 17, 1896 in Live Oak, Suwannee County, Fl.

Lee Voyles, son of Perry Voyles and Emiline

Mackenison, ( correct spelling is Maconson) b Feb 12, 1868 in Sumter Co, Fl bap SAA

Brackson J. Voyles, son of (check) b Feb 12, 1868 in SAA bap SAA

John Miles, son of John Miles and Mattie Jowers, b Sept 10, 1868 in Barnwell, S.C. bap SAA

George W. Tompkins, son of Ben Tompkins and

Josephine Carroll, b Nov 17, 1867 in Suwannee Co., Fl. bap SAA

Laura Carroll, dau of Alexander Wilson and Martha Pipkins, b Mar 3, 1872 in Suwannee Co., Fl. bap SAA

Lizzie Williams, dau of William A. Revels and Annie Jowers, b date not listed in Barnwell Co., S.C. bap SAA

Emma Voyles, dau of Henry Lamb and Adaline Lanier,



b Feb 21, 1878 in Madison Co, Fl bap SAA  
 Carrie Carroll, dau of Patrick Bartley and Maggie Smith, b July 18, 1802 in Richmond, Ga. bap SAA  
 Minnie L. Jowers, dau of James Jowers and Carrie Bartley, b Mar 27, 1876 in SAA bap SAA  
 Nora Adams, dau of Morgan Adams and Henrietta Revels, b Feb 20, 1879 in Lafette Co., Fa. bap March 22, 1896 in SAA  
 Callie Watley, father unkn mother Charity Watley, b Jan 4, 1881 in Taylor Co., Fl. bap SAA  
 John W. Hill, son of Green B. Hill and Susan A. Calahan, b Apr 16, 1847 in Madison Co bap April 5, 1896 in Madison Co., Fl.  
 Melinda Bell Grisham, dau of Jos. Lemuel Grisham and Sara Evaline Cain, b March 21, 1870 in Gordin, Ga. bap SAA  
 Lavinia Grisham, dau of Josh Lemuel and Sara Evaline, b June 2, 1875 in Womba, Mississippi bap SAA  
 [Finish pages 108–10]

[Pages 110–111 contain the confirmation dates and names of persons performing ordinances. Have omitted for space reasons.]

[Page 112]

Sara Huggins, dau of William Sanders Norris and Mary Eliz. Nealy, b July 25, 1861 in Jefferson Co., Fl. bap Apr 12, 1896 in Nashville, Jefferson Co., Fl.  
 Uriah Eaton Hassell, child of Addison Hassell and Martha Ann Palmer, b May 31, 1853 in Columbia, Ga bap April 12, 1896 in SAA  
 Mattie Terry Hassell, dau of Isaac Pauler and Mary Revel, b Nov 3, 1822 in Col. Co., Fl. Bap SAA  
 Addison Hassell, son of Edward Hassell and Judith Rindrick, b July 21, 1821 in SAA bap SAA  
 Mary Winford Hassell, dau of Addison Hassell and Mary Ann Palmer, b Nov 27, 1859 in Loundes, Ga. Bap SAA  
 James Buchanan Wright, son of James S. Turner and Isabell Wright, b Apr 1, 1857 in Ocoola, Fl. Bap Apr 10, 1896 in Thomas City, Jefferson Co., Fl.  
 Mary Jane Ratliff, dau of Alvin Ratliff and Sophy Grady, b Oct 12, 1846 in Worth, Ga. Bap May 10, 1896 in Thomas City, Jefferson Co., Fl.  
 Hannah J. Brock, dau of Jno Davis and Hannah McMullin, b July 16, 1837 in Washington Co., Ga. bap May 10, 1896 in Days, Lafayette Co., Fl.  
 Clara Jowers, dau of James Jowers and C.E. Bartley, b Aug 24, 1877 in Suwannee Co., bap Apr 18, 1896 in Haw Pond, Suwannee Co., Fl.  
 Mary Baxter, dau of William Tidwell and Fildrew Lockard, b Apr 19, 1840 in S.C. bap Apr 19, 1896 in Live Oak, Suwannee Co., Fl.  
 Harriett A. Baxter, dau of Jas Eli Baxter and Mary

Tidwell, b Apr 13, 1880 in Taylor Co., Fl. bap SAA  
 Lydia E. Bass, dau of Greenberry Hill and Susanna Calhoun, b Mar 11, 18? in Taylor Co., Fl. bap May 3, 1896 in Madison Co., Fl.  
 Rebecca Faulkner, dau of John Faulkner and Visa Hill, b May 7, 1881 in Taylor Co., Fl. bap May 3, 1896 in Madison Co., Fl.  
 Visa S. Faulkner, dau of Greenberry Hill and Susanna Calhoun, b Feb 1, 1862 in Taylor Co., Fl. bap SAA  
 Perry Voyles, son of John Hess Voyles and Jane Reno, b June 8, 1824 in Jackson Co., Ga. bap May 10, 1896 Live Oak, Suwannee Co., Fl.  
 Elvira Emaline Voyles, dau of William Makenson (correct spelling is Maconson) and Mary M. Petty, b Nov 15, 1825, bap SAA  
 Archie Voyles, son of John G. Voyles and Louisia Voyles, b Feb 24, 1883 in Suwannee, Fl. Bap SAA  
 James C. Jowers, son of Jas Jowers and C.E. Bartley, no birth date born Florida Bap SAA  
 Charity Markey, dau of Lewis Cour Milton no mother name, b May 3, 1843 in Jeffrson Co., Fl. Bap May 24, 1896 Madison, Madison Co., Fl.  
 Pasha E. Edwards, child of Jessee Overbee and Eliz. Edwards, b Dec 1, 1845 in Johnson, N.C. bap SAA  
 Levi Edwards, son of Benjamin Edwards and Pasha E. Overbee, b May 19, 1880 in Morrison, S.C. bap SAA  
 Charge (Charles?) Edwards, son of Benj. Edwards and Pasha E. Overbee, born Oct 3, 1874 in Johnson, N.C. bap SAA  
 Fannie Norris, dau of Lewis Keen and Mary Hill, b Dec 22, 1859 in Brooks, Ga. bap SAA

[Pages 116–117]

George L. Norris, son of Allagood Norris and Eliz Windon, b Aug 29, 1859 in Jefferson Co., Fl. bap May 24, 1896 in Madison, Madison Co., Fl.  
 James Elia Baxter, son of Israel Baxter and Mary Fusch, b Jan 6, 1826 in Jackson Co., Fl. bap June 4, 1896 in Live Oak, Suwannee Co., Fl.  
 Joseph Tuddle, son of Jos. R. Tuddle and Mary Ann Russell, b Apr 20, 1841 in Ireland b SAA  
 Charity Watley, dau of Willis Watley and Lucy Rondo, B Oct 18, 1855 in Ala. bap May 7, 1896 SAA  
 James Watley, son of Willis Watley and Charity Watley, b Mar 27, 1882 in Suwannee Co., Fl. bap June 7, 1896 SAA  
 Fannie Williams, dau of Branton Williams and Mary Williams, b May 25, 1847 in Stuart, Ga. Bap June 4, 1896 Higdon, Madison Co., Fl.  
 Susanna Hill, dau of Bryant Callhan and Jane Collins, b Aug 11, 1827 in Duley, Ga. bap June 4, 1896 in SAA  
 Phara Makay, child of Isaah Makay no mother listed, b Apr 29, 1876 in Madison Co., Fl. bap June 14, 1896 SAA

Robert McGill, son of Alexander McGill no mother listed, b Dec 20, 1869 in Madison Co., Fl. bap June 15, 1896 SAA

Arkina Keen, child of William Lane and Pemeiah Gigger, b May 11, 1839 in Applon, Ga. Bap June 14, Suwannee Shoals, Col. Co., Fl.

William M. Peddie, son of John A. Peddie and Louisia Johnson, b Dec 2, 1862 in Gadsden, Fl., bap. May 16, 1996 Suwannee Shoals in Liberty County.

Bascom Rowell, son of Henry Rowell and Polly Ann Hendry, b Mar 5, 1875 in Taylor Co., Fl. bap June 21, 1896 in Lake Bird, Taylor Co., Fl.

Harris B. Hodges, son of C.R. Hodges and Juliatte Stacy, b Jan 28, 1873 in Boston, Ga. bap June 21, 1896 in Live Oak, Suwannee Co., Fl.

W.H. Redding, son of Henry H. Redding and Sarah Hand, b Sept 12, 1826 in Scriven, Ga. bap SAA

Hattie L. Redding, dau of Ezekall Willson and Matilda Bell, b Sept 28, 1854 in Darlington, S.C. Bap SAA

Amanda E. Smith, dau of William Ritcheson and Eliz. Pallard, b July 9, 1860 in Leon Co., Fl. bap June 14, 1896 in Greenville, Madison, Fl.

Alridge Hurst, son of William Hurst and Rebecca Wells, b Mar 1, 18? in Suwannee bap July 5, 1896 in LiveOake Suwannee Co., Fl.

William Voyles, son of Perry Voyles and Elvira Mackension (Maconson), b June 2, 1866 Sumter Co., Fl. bap SAA

Mary Miles, dau of Wm A. Mackey and Celena Stanley, b May 25, 1864 in Jefferson Co., Fl. bap SAA

Ennis Voyles, dau of William A. Mackey and Selena Stanley, b Feb 16, 1875 Suwannee Co., Fl. bap SAA

Mamie Hurst, dau of Alridge Hurst and Mattie Thompson, b July 11, 1884 in Clinch Co., Ga. bap SAA

Lula Hurst, dau of Perry Voyles and Elvina Makesin (Maconson), b March 7, 1864 in Banks, Ga. bap SAA

Ida Redding, dau of Wade H. Redding and Hattie Wilson, b July 27, 1889 bap SAA

Elaly W. Williams, child of Andrew Pullum and Lucy Bray, b Dec 23, 1821 in Halifax, Va. bap June 29, 1896 in Madison Co., Fl.

William Day, son of William Day and Nepsy Hall, b 1844 in Hamilton Co., Fl. bap July 8, 1896 at Lake Bird, Taylor Co, Fl.

Anna Lee, dau of Job Hill and Mary Thompson, b Jan 22, 1812 in Tennessee Co., bap July 9, 1896 at Mosely Hall, Madison Co., Fl.

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Thomas F. McDaniel, son of William McDaniel and Julie McKinsey, b July 5, 1866 in Hamilton Co., Fl. bap July 9, 1896 at Lake Bird, Taylor Co., Fl.

Mary N. Wright, dau of Jacob R. Parnell and Sara

Wallsten, b Nov 16, 1867 in Col. Co., Fl. Bap July 7, 1896 in Suwannee Co., Fl.

Polly Ann Day, dau of Robert Hendry and Martha Carlton, b Feb 24, 1847 in Thomas, Ga. bap July 15, 1896 in Lake Bird, Taylor Co., Fl.

W. Radford Rowell, son of Henry A. Rowell and Polly Ann Hendry, b Aug 22, 1878 in Taylor Co., Fl. bap SAA

Henry L. Wilson, son of Henry Wilson and Ann E. Hyatt, b Sept 29, 1855 in Bradford, Fl. bap July 20, 1896 in Palmeto, Col. Co., Fl.

Syrinthia A., dau of Wilson Henry Robinson and Nancy Groover, b Jan 12, 1865 in Applon, Ga. bap SAA

Martha Peddie, dau of John Albert Long and Mary (?), b Oct 27, 1852 in Gasdin, Fl. bap July 26, 1896 in Liberty Co., Fl.

Mary A. Della Peddie, dau of George Washington Peddie and Martha Nln (?) b Nov 13, 1876 in Gasden, Fl. bap July 16, in SAA

John Monroe Peddie, father SAA mother Sabrina, b June 6, 1880 in Liberty Co., Fl, bap SAA

John Co. Williams, son of Godfrey Williams and Mary McCall, b July 12, 1844 in Tattnell, Ga. bap July 21, 1896 in Lee, Madison Co., Fl.

Sara L. Wright, dau of Wade H. Redding and Mary A. Wilson, b Jan 18, 1869 in Suwannee Co., Fl. bap July 26, 1896 in Suwannee Co., Fl.

Deby L. Edwards, dau of Benjamin Edwards and Pashae Oveybee, b May 29, 1876 in Green, N.C. bap Aug 2, 1896 in Madison Co., Fl.

Mary E. Edwards, parents SAA b Aug 5, 1882 in Marion, S.C. bap SAA

Nancy E. Edwards, parents SAA b Aug 18, 1885 in Orhea, S.C. b SAA

Gardner B. Simmons, son of Isaac Simmons and Liddie Neely, b Jan 31, 1825 in Dallas, Ala. Bap Aug 2, 1896 in Holmes Co., Fl.

Alvie E. Boseman, son of Andrew Bozeman and Mary E. Lindsey, b May 4, 1880 in Holmes Co., Fl. bap Aug 2, 1896 SAA

Mary E. Bozeman, dau of Gardon Lindsey and Betsy Ryles, b July 1859 Coffee Co., Al. Bap SAA

Emily Bozeman, dau of Andrew Bozeman and Mary E. Lindsey, b Jan 22, 1875 in Covington, Ala. bap SAA

Jasper E. Peddie, son of John A. Peddie and Louisa Johnson, b Oct 8, 1858 in Gadson, Fl. bap July 16, in Bristol, Liberty Co., Fl.

Susan F. Peddie, dau of Harvey Boykin and Eliz Matthews, b Sept 16, 1856 in Gadsden, Fl. July 16, in Bristol, Liberty Co., Fl.

Sara F. Dalton, dau of Wm. H. Clay and Laresa M., b Sept 15, 1850 in Gadsden, Fl. bap July 31, 1896 SAA  
Seralthous Peddie, child of Abram Deason and Mary



McMullin, b Nov 17, 1869 in Jackson Co., Fl. bap SAA  
Americus Barrington, child of Samuel W. Barrington  
and Winnifred Woolf, b July 16, 1841 in Jackson Co.,  
Fl., bap July 29, 1896 in Auccilla, Jefferson Co., Fl.  
Julius Evans, son of Redic P. Evans and Mary F.  
McMullin, b Dec 1, 1881 in Early, Ga. bap Aug 2, 1896  
in Orange Hill, Washington Co., Fl.  
Daniel D. Evans, parents SAA b Sept 1, 1878 in SAA  
bap SAA

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Olive Dearson, child of Daniel Minton and Emma Hill,  
b Jan 1, 1867 in Baker Co., Fl. bap Aug 5, 1896 in  
Briston, Liberty Co., Fl.

Mac Rhodes, child of Michael Rhodes and Sara J.  
Bauldree, b July 16, 1879 in Liberty Co, Fl. bap Aug 5,  
1896 in SAA

J.A. W. Calvin, child of Robert Calvin and Mary D.  
Miller, b Aug 27, 1826 in Gadsden, Fl. bap July 19, in  
Gadsden Co., Fl.

Mary C. Calvin

*(End of entries as Ms. Urry said the handwriting  
became too difficult to read. Future researchers should per-  
sonally research these records in the SLC Historical Archives,  
as well as other available and recorded early Church records  
using caution as to spellings, dates and places.)*

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*I am proud I am a Mormon. When I heard the 'Mormons' preach I  
did as James says: "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of  
God. And ask in faith, and it will be given him." That is why I  
am a Mormon. I know Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and  
that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, and I would give  
my life before I would deny it.*

*J.B. Mayfield*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*Psalm 40:1. "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined  
unto me and heard my cry." Your sister in the cause of truth.*

*Ollie Blitch*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*We know that the gospel is true and that we have been greatly  
blessed by obeying its commandments. We know that if we prove  
faithful to the last we shall be exalted in the kingdom of God.*

*J.C. Manning and wife Della.*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*To all friends and investigators: The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints is the true Church, and the gospel taught  
by the traveling Elders is the true gospel, as we understand it.*

*L.L. Moody and wife, Florence Moody.*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*To all who may read this: My testimony is this: I believe that  
the Church of Christ with its former organization, ordinances,  
gifts and spiritual power, has been re-organized on earth. Our  
son, John Hilton, was restored to health by the power of God  
through the administration of the Elders. He was able to arise  
immediately after being sick some weeks of a powerful fever,  
and after his nose and mouth had been bleeding several hours.  
Many others of our loved ones have been restored to health in  
the same way.*

*Susan E. Hill*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*I believe in the restored gospel, and that Joseph Smith was a  
prophet of God. I often feel glad that this came in my time. I  
am 80 years old. I have been a member 11 years.*

*Sarah M. Henderson*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*I am pleased at this opportunity to bear my testimony to the  
world. Since I read the Book of Mormon and was baptized six  
years ago, I have felt to know that Joseph Smith and his suc-  
cessors were and are true prophets of God, instruments in His  
hands to restore the only true gospel whereby man can be saved.*

*Loretta Henderson*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*I know that God is the Eternal Father, and that the great lat-  
ter-day work in which we are enlisted is verily His, and that  
Joseph Smith was a true prophet of the living God.*

*Melissa Henderson*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

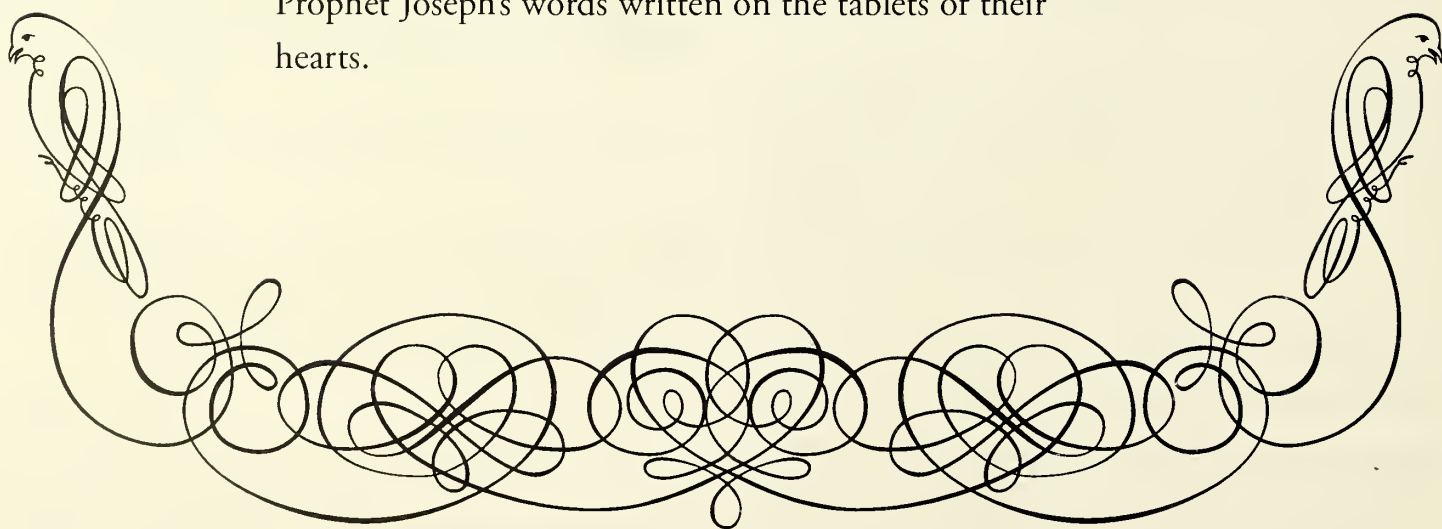


## *Instructions On 'How To Preach'*

While addressing Elders in the Kirkland Temple the Prophet Joseph Smith told them they should go forth in all meekness, in sobriety, and preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified; not to contend with others on account of their faith or systems of religion, but pursue a steady course.

This he delivered by way of commandment and promised that all those who observed it not would pull down persecution upon their head, while those who would observe it should always be filled with the Holy Ghost; this he pronounced as a prophecy and sealed with Hosannah and Amen.

These remarks were made to Elders who were receiving instructions just prior to departing on missions, and it is well for Elders who are now on missions to have the Prophet Joseph's words written on the tablets of their hearts.



# SAMUEL ISOM'S MISSIONARY JOURNAL

*Samuel Isom was born at Mount Dell, near Virgin, Utah, April 27, 1869. He was called to serve a mission to the Southern States November 8, 1895, at the age of 26. He and Elizabeth Jane Wright Isom were married in the St. George Temple on June 7, 1893. The couple had a daughter and Elizabeth was expecting their second children when his call came. While serving his mission, their little daughter became ill and died. The shock sent Elizabeth into labor and resulted in the early birth and death of their son who lived only long enough to be named. Though Elizabeth's condition was critical, they refused to accept a release and he served nobly for three years before returning home. The couple had three other children. Samuel served as the first Bishop in Hurricane, Utah, a calling that lasted for 15 years until his death February 27, 1923, at age 55 from pneumonia.*

*Elder Samuel Isom's missionary journal was given to Vella V. Tilton of San Mateo in 1995 by Norman Gates, grandson of Elder Samuel Isom who baptized her grandmother Henrietta Tucker in Columbia County, Florida, in 1896. The first one-third of the record is missing, apparently divided at his death. All efforts to locate the missing years have been in vain. Elder Isom arrived in the Southern States Mission field 16 Nov 1895, 16 days after the Florida Conference was created. The first entry in this record was dated 9 Mar 1897. When the actual name of persons he has mentioned is known an \* will indicate the information has been added. Most place names and personal names have been misspelled in this work. With few exceptions this record has been left as written and recorded by Elder Isom. (The journal has been edited slightly for brevity.)*

MISSIONARY RECORD OF SAMUEL ISOM OF  
Mountain Dell, Washington County, Utah.  
SOUTHERN STATES MISSION  
MARCH 1897 TO JANUARY 1898

Tuesday, March 9, 1897: Columbia County, Florida

After eating dinner with Mr. George Kirkland, we, in company with eight or ten men and women, started for Sycamore, where we were to baptize E.J. Rogerson. When we arrived at the creek, we found quite a number of people congregated. Pres. Cutler did the speaking and the baptizing. I did the confirming. Elder R. Cutler and I ate supper with Mr. Long, then walked across dangerous foot log and arrived at the school house just in time for a meeting. After the meeting Elder Cutler and I went home with Mr. Crews and his wife.

Wednesday, March 10, 1897

I met Pres. Cutler and Elder A.G. Sedgwick at the school house and started for Black Jack (\*in Columbia County) where we were to hold a meeting that night. On the road we decided that it would be best for us to have our mail. Accordingly, Elders Sedgwick and Cutler started for the Suwannee Valley, leaving Pres. Cutler and me at Black Jack to fill the appointment. We had a nice meeting and stayed all night with Mr. David Register.

Thursday, March 11, 1897

We left Mr. Register's and started for Oak Grove (Union County). When we arrived there we found Mr. Clus Keen getting out his seed cane. He invited us to come and chew some cane, which we did. We ate dinner with Mr. Hurst. In the evening we had supper with Mr. Keen, and then went to church. We found a nice congregation waiting for us. We held a meeting and then went back to Mr. Clus Keen's for the night.

Friday, March 12, 1897

Pres. P. Cutler and I went down to the big Creek Bridge and waited for the Elders until late in the evening. Then we went to the home of Mr. Tom Sistrunk for supper. While there the Elders came and we all went to the Sistrunk house and held a meeting. Then we all went home with Mr. Sistrunk.

Saturday, March 13, 1897 Columbia County, Florida

We went to Palmetto Hall, held a meeting, blessed two children belonging to the Waldrom girls, and stayed all night with Mr. \*Isaac Josiah Tucker.

Sunday, March 14, 1897

It was a fast day. We started for Aixtight to fill our appointments. Then when we arrived we found the school house crowded. Sisters Keen and Hodge had prepared a nice dinner and brought it to the school house, but, it being a fast day we could not help them eat it. After a meeting in the afternoon dismissed, we all went home with Mr. George Keen for supper. We spent a very pleasant evening talking on the gospel.

Monday, March 15, 1897

We went to the valley and got our mail and stayed with Brother J.B. Wright

Tuesday, March 16, 1897

Elder C.G. Sedgwick and I started for Hamilton Co. to see Bro. Milton and bless his children. We called at the P.O. and received mail from home, which brought the sad news of the death of Rodney Gibson, which makes the seventh death in the family since I left home. We walked 12 miles and found Brother Milton living near Genoa. We stayed with him all night.



Wednesday, March 17, 1897

We walked to the valley and found Elders Robbins and Lund at Brothers Wright's. They had just come from Bradford County. We all remained in the valley until Saturday.

Saturday, March 20, 1897

We held one Priesthood meeting; there were eight Elders present. We remained at the Brown's until the morning of the 22nd. Then we went to the Johnson's, the section foreman, and had dinner. From there we went to R.L. Colsons on the R.C. and P.R.R. for the night. On the day following, Elder R.B. Cutler and I went to the home of Elihu Richards and found Elders Robbins, Gee, Lund, and Sedgwick there. Elder Gee and I spent the night with Sim Richards.

Wednesday, March 24, 1897

Elders Robbins and Sedgwick went to Bradford County and Elders Gee and Lund went to Alachua County. Elder Cutler and I went to the house of Mr. Pearce. We called in the neighbors and held a meeting.

Thursday, March 25, 1897

We went to the home of H.C. Markham and had dinner. Then we went out and invited in all the neighbors and had a nice meeting. We remained there all night.

Friday, March 26

We went to the house of Mr. Rump and had dinner. Then we went to Mason to the Post Office and got some mail, then continued on to Ellisville and spent the night at the home of Daniel Beasley.

Saturday, March 27

We remained at Mr. Beasley's all day and sent out an appointment to the Grist Mill for the day (Sunday). There was a Baptist Minister by the name of Dayman who came into the neighborhood and said he was going to expose Mormonism. He gave out two appointments for the day following.

Sunday, March 28

At ten in the morning the people began to come in and we held a meeting. The people were very attentive. At 2 p.m. the people returned and the minister came with them and listened very attentively. After the meeting the minister had not a word to say, but went off to his evening appointment. He had very few hearers. At 7 p.m. we held another meeting and stayed at Mr. Beasley's all night.

Monday, March 29

Elder Cutler and I were writing some letters when in came Parson Dayman. He said he had come to talk with

us. I told him that we were always pleased to talk on the Gospel. He commenced by calling us false teachers. I told him that remained to be proven and so the argument commenced. It lasted about three hours. During the conversation he got mad, but I would laugh at him and tell him he ought to be ashamed of himself to get mad when he was talking on the Gospel, and when he got wound up so bad he couldn't do or say anything else, he told us that we were only boys and he was old and we ought to give up to him. I told him I would fall under the Curse that Paul uttered if I did, and for that reason I would not give an inch to him. He told me if I would stop teaching Mormonism I could do lots of good. I told him that Mormonism would save all that would obey it. He went off mad, as they generally do when they get whipped out. We went to the office at Mason and then went to the home of Mr. William Beasley for the night.

Tuesday, March 30

We continued on south and took dinner with Mr. Robin Clark. From there we went to Milesville and stayed with Mr. John Carnel and spent a very pleasant evening talking on the Gospel with him.

Wednesday, March 31

We left Mr. Carnel's and went to Pineville to do some canvassing. We found the people so full of prejudice that it was a hard job for us to get entertainment. We traveled along until after dark and finally we stayed with Mr. Winn.

Thursday, April 1

We did some canvassing in the morning and found it would be impossible to hold meetings. So we went back to Mikesville and spent the night with Mr. Fillingham.

Friday, April 2

We visited the National Bridge. It is Wash Day on the Saniflee River. I am seated on the banks of ———, the National Bridge at Leno, while I write. Elder R.B. Cutler and I have just washed our garments and they are hanging on the vines that climb among the moss-covered trees that the banks of the river. The Pond-Lilies cluster along the edges of the water making a lovely site. The River runs about 200 yds. below where I am sitting and sinks to rise again in about one mile. While I sit here with my journal upon my knee and gaze upon the beautiful scenery before me, and listen to the gentle ripple of the water and hear the sweet notes of the Mockingbird and other birds of song that inhabit the sunny south, it fills my heart with feelings that words can't express. But when I turn my mind from this beautiful scenery to the rugged mountain gorges and the snow-clad peaks of the Northwest and when I let my mind divert from this train of thought and contemplate



upon the great Plan of Salvation wrought out by Christ for the redemption of the souls of the children of men, my heart heaves with warm emotion and I wonder how man can be so shallow as to doubt the existence of God, or even question Him being the great creative and sustaining power of all things. Again, when I contemplate upon the condition of the world and listen to the sophistry that issues from every press and pulpit for the purpose of deceiving mankind, I cannot help but heave a sigh and exclaim (next 5 1/2 pages are blank)

#### **Saturday, April 3**

We remain at Mr. Carrol's until after dinner. Then we went to True Graham's and fixed some seats in his saw mill under the gin house. A Christian Minister by the name of Dix came with several other Bradford County people and attended our meeting. We spent the night there.

#### **Sunday, April 4**

We held two nice meetings. There were about 30 white people and as many Darkeys. It was laughable to see the colored people carry on after the meeting. They wanted us to promise to come back again.

#### **Wednesday, April 7**

We went to the house of David Edinfield's at night and held a meeting there.

#### **Friday, April 9**

We went to the house of Mr. Daniel Beasley and held a meeting. There were 3 doctors, Julien, Berry, and Cook in attendance.

#### **Saturday, April 10**

We left for Ellisville and started north, went to Mason, got our mail, and from there we went to Ed Hank's for dinner. While we were there Mr. Beasley and his daughter Liddie came along on their road to Bradford County to be baptized. We went to the river, but could not get across, so they went back to Mr. Green's to our appointment.

#### **Sunday, April 11**

Mr. Beasley and Liddie went home and Elder Cutler and I went to fill our appointments in the Markham Settlement. When we arrived we found the people gathering. They filled the house overflowing three times that day. We stayed with Mr. H.C. Markham all night. Markham was very kind.

#### **Monday, April 12**

We left the Markham Settlement and went to the Pearce Neighborhood and held a meeting staying all night at the home of Theodore Pearce.

#### **Tuesday, April 13**

We passed through Hagen and went up the Georgia Southern R.R. and took dinner with the section foreman and invited all the people to come to the home of Elihu Richards, which they did. The house was crowded with eager listeners and for an hour and a half I spoke on the principle of the Holy Ghost and Baptism. We stayed with Elihu all night.

#### **Wednesday, April 14**

We left the Richards Settlement, walked to Brown, Florida, a distance of 14 miles via Lake City, to dinner with Joe Johnson, the section foreman on the Georgia Southern R.R., and arrived at Brother Wright's about sundown. We remained there until the morning of the 16th.

#### **Friday, April 16**

We left the Suwanneeville Valley and started for the Flat Woods. We ate dinner with Sister Keen and then went to Palmetto and stayed all night with Brother Wilson.

#### **Saturday, April 17**

After breakfast we left the Palmetto Settlement and continued on north. We attended a Baptist meeting at Oak Grove Church. After which we went to Benton and sent our word that we would speak that night. We went to the school house and found a large crowd of eager listeners and had a nice meeting. Then we went home with Mr. Still Meton. Edith Register and Nettie Kirkland applied for baptism in the meeting. A large crowd went to the home of Mr. Meton that night to hear us talk.

#### **Sunday, April 18**

Sunday I was very sick; I could hardly walk to the school house. Elder R.B. Cutler administered to me and I was able to speak with power on the organization of the Church. After we dismissed our meeting we learned that there were six going to be baptized. Accordingly, we notified the people of the hour and place appointed for Baptism, and at 3 o'clock, they all assembled themselves on the bank of Little Creek at the Register Ford. We had a nice meeting after which I baptized Louisa Melton, Edith Register, Mellie and George Kirkland, Alice Meton, and Lizzie Hines. After the meeting was over, Minister Rolf asked a few questions. After answering them we all walked back to Benton's and had supper, went to the school house at 7 o'clock and found the house well-filled with people waiting for us to come. We stayed that night with George Kirkland.

#### **Monday, April 19**

We spent the morning part of the day visiting the members preparatory to leaving them. We ate dinner

with Sister Hines. Then we went to the river and met Brother Kemp with a boat ready to take me to Hamilton County where we were to speak that evening at 7 o'clock. At the appointed hour the Tiner School House was packed full to over-flowing. The people begged us to come back and preach for them again, but on account of Conference we could not. We stayed all night with Dan Brady.

#### Thursday, April 22

After breakfast we went to the house of Katharine Waldron and found that her sister Mrs. Wiggins was going to be baptized with her. At 3 o'clock a large crowd met on the banks of Big Creek to witness the baptisms. I spoke on the Baptism of Water and Spirit for an hour and baptized the two ladies. Elder Cutler confirmed Idella, and I confirmed Katie.

#### Friday, April 23

We visited all the members of Palmetto, then walked six miles and stayed over night with George Keen.

#### Saturday, April 24

While at the breakfast table, Mr. Keen told us that he would be baptized; also, a Mr. Rauleson came up to the gate and said he wished to be baptized. Accordingly, we called all the neighbors together at the edge of the little stream that flows near the house of Mr. Keen and held a nice meeting. I did the baptizing, agreeable to the wishes of Brother Keen. We ate dinner there, then went on to Evergreen and held a meeting. We spent the night with William Owens.

#### Sunday, April 25

I spoke to a crowded house at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. People came for over 10 miles to hear us. After the meeting we walked 5 miles back to the house of Brother Keen and there found Elders Nebeker and Butterfield. We spent a pleasant evening singing and talking.

#### Monday, April 26

We remained at Catchall all day to rest. Sister Keen was going with us to the Suwannee Valley the next day to attend a picnic.

#### Tuesday, April 27

We left brother Keen's early in the morning and went to the valley where we met Elders Blood, Gee, Lund, Snow, Ball, Robbins, and Sedgwick. The sisters had prepared a picnic and we went into the woods on the shores of a small lake. We cut palmetto fans and spread on the ground for seats. We had recitations, songs, and stump speakers until noon. Then we ate our picnic and spent the balance of the day singing and chatting beneath the lovely moss covered Oaks and Magnolia trees. I had one

of the most enjoyable times that I had ever spent in my life. When it came time for us to break up, I took Brother Wright's buggy and took Sister Waldron to the station and came back in the dark, through the woods with a torch in my hand so I could see my way through the dense forest. We stayed at Brother J.B. Wright's house all night.

#### April 28 and 29

We spent these days at Brother J.B. Wright's. These two days were set apart as a General Fast for the benefit of the Mission in general, that our Conference might be a success.. On the night of the 29th, Elders Robbins and I walked three miles and broke our fast at the home of Joe Johnson, a section foreman on the Georgia Southern R.R.

#### Friday, April 30

We left Mr. Johnson's and walked down into Lake City. I bought a hat, a tie, and a pair of shoes. Then we visited several of the merchants who were our friends, chatted with them, bid them goodbye, walked back to the depot and met the rest of the Elders. Brother Wright purchased the tickets and we all boarded the west-bound train and started for Conference. We passed through Live Oak, Suwannee County, and Madison County. We got off the train at Greenville, and were surprised to learn that President Kimball was on the same train with us. We got off the train at Greenville at 2 p.m., shouldered our grips, and walked about 12 miles to Hasselville where we were going to hold Conference. Elders Gee, Robbins, and I stayed at the house of Brother Barrington in Jefferson County.

#### Saturday, May 1, Jefferson County

At 8 o'clock we met at the Arbor to practice our hymns. At 10 o'clock the people began to come and meeting was called to order by President Frank Cutler. The prayer was given by W.G. Fisher. Then Elder Stevenson spoke on the definition of Faith. We dismissed at 4 o'clock and I walked a distance of six miles and stayed at the home of Mr. Butler at Ashville.

#### Sunday, May 2

At 8 o'clock we all met at the Arbor and sang hymns until 11 when the meeting was called to order by President Cutler. Elder W.G. Fisher spoke on the organization of the Church. (journal records order and speakers for Conference)

#### Monday, May 3

Met at Arbor to begin our Priesthood Meeting for the purpose of giving reports of our labors for previous year. After meeting I went to the home of Joe Hassels.



**Tuesday, May 4**

We all met in the Priesthood meeting again to receive instructions, but before we commenced we all had our pictures taken by a Lake City Photographer who had come there for that purpose. Afterward President Kimball spoke for four hours on the duties of an elder, Elder W.G. Fisher and I were chosen as special Elders to labor in City's and captive County Seats. After we were dismissed I went to the home of Mr. Laver with Presidents Cutler and Kimball, and Elders Black, Watts, and Fisher.

**Wednesday, May 5**

We met at the Arbor at 8 a.m. and Pres Kimball addressed us, then bid us good by. After he left we all, in a line, two abreast, had our pictures taken again. Then the Elders began to scatter to their fields of labor. Elder Frank Smith and I went to the home of Brother Barrington. I had been suffering all through Conference with a bad cold, and Sister Barrington gave me some turpentine that did some good. So our Conference closed for the year 1897.

**Thursday, May 6**

Elders C.J. Brown, W.G. Fisher, Frank Smith, E.B. Lewis, and I went to Ashville to do some baptizing. We went to the edge of a beautiful little lake near Ashville. Elder Brown called on me to preach a sermon at the water edge. I did so. Elder Smith did the baptizing. The names of the two young men were Will and David Butler. After the baptisms were over, we all went to the home of their father and confirmed them members and administered the Sacrament. We dismissed our baptism meeting, bid the people good bye, and all had a bath in the lake. Elder Fisher and I went back to Hasselville and stayed all night with Brother Barrington.

**Friday, May 7**

Elder W.G. Fisher and I stayed at Brother Barrington's until after dinner and blessed Brother Barrington's five children. Then we bid the people of Hasselville goodbye and started for Greenville, a distance of 12 miles. On our way we saw an alligator that someone had killed by the roadside. We arrived at the home of Mr. Tom Drew about dark, where we remained all night.

**Saturday, May 8**

After breakfast we walked to Greenville and walked 10 miles through lovely cypress swamps and pine groves until we arrived at the home of Brother George Harris.

**Monday, May 10**

Elder Watts and I went out into the woods and had a bath and then went to the house of Sister Markey and had our supper.

**Tuesday, May 11**

Elders Watts and Cloward met Elder Fisher and me on the R.R. and we all walked down towards Madison City. When we got within a mile of the city, Elder Fisher and I went off into the woods and dedicated the city to the Lord before entering it. Then we went in and visited two of the best hotels, but failed to get entertainment. Then we went to the Sheriff to get permission to speak in the Court House, but that gentleman very insultingly told us that we could not have it. I went to the office and received a letter from Mariak (?). Then we went down to the depot and stayed with Mr. David G. Cummins.

**Wednesday, May 12 , Madison County, Florida**

After breakfast we went up to town and visited the Waterworks. There was a tank holding about one hundred thousand gallons of water. Then we went to the Printing Office thinking to subscribe for the county paper, but the editor was not in. We told the young man that we would like an interview with the Editor. He said, "It will do you no good if you do." So, we went out into the woods and had a prayer, sat under the shade of the trees for a while, and read a few chapters from the Bible. Then we went back into the city, distributed a little literature, sauntered downtown to the race track, and from there went to the house of Mr. Cummins.

**Thursday, May 13**

We visited the Cotton Seed Oil Factory and saw the oil being pressed out of the mill. Then we went through the warehouse which was 120 square. We left the depot and started up town where we met Brother George Harris. He took us around and introduced us to several merchants and businessmen. Then we decided that we should go out of the city for a few days. Accordingly, we jumped into Brother Harris's wagon and rode out 6 miles and remained all night with him. (The missionaries spent the next several days at Brother Harris's home and that of Sister Markey's where they held many meetings successfully)

**Saturday, May 15**

We entered the city about 10 a.m., went to the office, and received mail from home. Then we went to a merchant by the name of Epps and got a large box to lay our books upon, fixed our stand on the corner of the Court House Block and commenced singing. In a few minutes we had about 75 hearers. Elder Fisher spoke first on the Principle of Faith. Then I continued on the same subject for about 30 minutes. Then we sang a Hymn and dismissed. Thus ended the first street meeting held by Mormon Elders in the State of Florida. At (?) o'clock we began singing again and continued singing. A nice crowd



collected. We had several of the businessmen and city officers at our meeting which was very gratifying. After dismissing our meeting we went out of the city with Brother Harris to stay a day or two. We attended a Methodist meeting held by Pastor Walker of Madison City, had a chat with him and sold him a Book of Mormon.

#### Tuesday, May 18

We had a shave, packed our grips, and started for Madison City. When we arrived we found it would be impossible to hold a street meeting so we passed the city and walked 7 miles into the country and stayed with Tom Hill.

#### Wednesday, May 19

We remained with Mr. Tom Hill until after dinner. Then we walked to the home of Sam Rullaforde where we were to preach that evening. We had a fine time and after meeting it was 'Come and go home with me' from everybody, but we remained with Mr. Rullaforde all night. (The missionaries remained in Madison County a few more days holding meetings and staying in the homes of Jack Jones, Mr. Cummins)

#### Friday, May 21

Mr. Jones came in early in the morning with a note in his hand which he found on the gate post informing us that we were not wanted any longer in the county and if we were not gone by 12 o'clock that night they would use the buggy tracers on us, and then if we were caught back that they would use the grass rope. We left word that we would be in Madison City that night and all the next day, and that if they would come we would preach to them. Accordingly, we went into the city that day and stayed all night at the depot with a Mr. Cummins, Section Foreman, of the F.C. & P. RR.

#### Saturday, May 22

At 11 a.m. we took our stand on the corner of the court house block and began singing. We soon had a crowd, and began preaching. We continued until we had preached five sermons. Then we learned that there was a crowd being made up to run us out of town, and that it was their intention to jump on us as soon as the ladies left. One of our friends had overheard the chat and came and told us. We bid the people goodbye that were on the grounds and started straight East until we reached the outskirts of the city. Then we turned and went West and gave them the slip. We walked six miles and reached the home of Brother George Harris about dark. We found quite a number of the Saints there so we held a nice little meeting that night.

#### Monday, May 24

After breakfast, we bid the Saints goodbye and walked down to Madison City; we went to the office and received some mail. The people seemed thunder-struck to think that we were back in the city after being threatened a few days before. While in town we sold 2 Book of Mormons, one to a Methodist Minister by the name of G.W. Walker. Then we took an easterly course for about 8 miles, keeping ourselves as close as possible to evade mobs, and stayed all night with Brother Williams near West Farm.

#### Tuesday, May 25

We remained at the home of Brother Williams until late in the afternoon. We each put a Hoecake of corn-bread in our coattail pocket and started out for a 23 mile walk. We reached the Suwannee river at Ellisville just before dark. We went to a spring on the bank of the river that discharges about 25,000 gallons per minute. There we knelt down in the grove and asked God to bless those of Madison County who had cared for us and forgive those who had rejected us and our testimony. Then we performed the solemn ordinance of washing our feet as a testimony against those who would not receive us nor hear our testimony. After attending to this ordinance, we crossed the great bridge into Suwannee County and traveled on until about 8 o'clock, when we went off away from the road and sat down and ate one of our little Hoecakes and rested for a while. Then we continued our journey arriving at Brother W.H. Redding's at 2 o'clock in the morning completely worn out. When we went to the door and yelled, Brother and Sister Redding and Ida got up and were overjoyed at meeting us. Sister Redding sat some milk on the table and we ate our other hoecake and went to bed. We stayed at Brother Redding's from May 25 until May 31. We were very careful not to be seen for fear the old spirit of mobocracy would arise. While there, Elder Fisher took the fever and for fear that he would continue to get worse and that we would be located by the mobs, Brother Mack Redding hired a buggy in Live Oak and we started for Columbia County at three o'clock in the morning. We arrived at Brother Wright's at noon and after a jaunt of 24 miles. From May 31 until June 8 we remained at Brother Wright's and in that vicinity. I visited the Saints in the Flat Woods on Sunday 6 and Snow Ball on the 7 and went fishing two days with Brother J.B. Wright. (Elders Isom, Fisher, Lewis, Gee and Cutler, Robbins worked in Columbia County, staying at homes of Sim Richards and Joe Johnson)

#### Saturday, June 12

After breakfast we went to the home of Sister Wright

to leave my clothes to be washed. Then we went to the home of Mr. Henry Markham and had dinner, and had a bath in a little lake in the grove near the plantation. Then we went to Joseph Markham's. His daughter, Lee, was a very agreeable young lady and entertained us royally as she sang well. After singing a few pieces from our books, we went on to the home of Sister Douberly where we were to preach that night. After the meeting Elders Robbins and Gee went home with Mr. Dix, and Ross B. Cutler and I remained at the home of Brother Douberly. Elder Cutler and I went to the home of Mr. Dix and found the Elders. Mr. Dix wanted us to bless their three children, which we did. I blessed Bessie, the oldest one. Then Elder Robbins and I started for Bradford County. Elders Gee and Cutler accompanied us a few miles. Then we shook hands, Elder fashion, and parted. We took dinner with B. Pearce. After which we went to the Olustee Creek that divides Bradford and Columbia Counties. Before crossing the line we selected a nice deep pond and then attended to the ordinance of foot washing as a testimony against those who had rejected us and the message that we bear, asking God to bless those that kindly received us, and to forgive those that had rejected and persecuted us. After having a nice bath, we went to the home of Mr. Dowling and had supper. Then he hitched the mule to the cart. He rode the mule, Florida style, and Elder R. and I were in the cart seated on two chairs, and away we went for the school house to fill our appointment, but a heavy rain came up and the meeting failed.

#### Sunday, June 13

At 10 o'clock in the a.m. we met Elders Lund and Holtsclaw at the New Zion Church, which was crowded and over-flowing. There were some of the Saints going into forbidden paths. Elders Holtsclaw and I went home with Brother Dowling

#### Monday, June 14 Bradford County, Florida

Elder Holtsclaw and I met Elders Robbins and Lund and we all went to the home of a Mr. Douglas for dinner. In the afternoon we continued in a southerly direction. As we were going along the road a little darkie girl came running to us and said her Ma wanted us to come over to the house to see the baby. It was sick. We went to the gate and the old lady brought out the child. We asked her several questions as to her belief. Then we told her to fast and pray for the child and we would remember her in our prayers which we did. After a walk of six miles, we arrived at the home of a Mr. Andrus where we stayed all night.

(Elders worked in Bradford County staying at the homes of Z.T. Andrus, Brother Sutton and Mr. Lind at Ward Station, and E.V. Fogg feasting on watermelons and

strawberries and on the way to Gainesville stayed at home of R.A. Scruggs.)

#### Tuesday, June 22,

We shined our shoes, brushed our clothes, and went up town to the Mayor's office in regard to canvassing and preaching on the streets. Then we visited the Arlington Hotel, where we entered into the conversation with several prominent men, which lasted about two hours. Mr. Seagle (owner of hotel) invited us into the dining room where we feasted on the fat of the land. While doing so, a bright little darkey stood by with a large palmetto fan to keep down the perspiration while we ate. We visited the City Hotel and told the proprietress our mode of traveling and she invited us to spend the night at the hotel. We accepted and ate a hearty supper. I would here state that before entering the city (Gainesville), we went into the woods and dedicated the city, the people, and ourselves into the hands of the Lord, asking him to soften the hearts of the people that they may understand and obey the message we were bearing. Also, to cause the proprietors of hotels to open their doors to us. Our prayers were answered in this respect on entering the city with the exception of one place. That was Spence Hotel. The gentleman there told us he could do nothing for us.

#### Saturday, June 26

We went to Arlington Hotel and got into an argument with the proprietor and an ex-editor by the name of McCreasy. He is the proprietor of the Sun, the leading newspaper.

(Entries made by Elder Isom on missionary work in Gainesville included many meetings held on the Court House square and in the homes of local residents, staying most of the time with the Burtons who were Seventh-Day Adventists.)

#### Tuesday, July 13

We spent the day visiting newspapers, bankers, proprietors of hotels, distributing books. We held a meeting at the home of Mr. Burton where we had a crowd of attentive hearers. The people that attended seemed disappointed to think that we were going away on the morrow.

#### Wednesday, July 14

Elder Robbins went down town to deliver a Book of Mormon and bid them goodbye, and I went up town to the home of Mr. Newburn to deliver a Book of Mormon and bid them goodbye. I found Mrs. Newburn at home. I had a nice chat with her on the Gospel. She gave me a standing invitation to call on them whenever I came to Gainesville. After bidding her goodbye, I went down to Mr. Burton's where our grips were, and began to pack



them, preparatory to leaving the city. We made Sister Burton a present of a Book of Mormon, one of Orson Pratt's books, one Voice of Warning and one Hymn book for her kindness during our stay in the City. After bidding adieu, we shouldered our grips and went out on the railroad. After walking about 4 miles, we came to the little stream of water, where we attended to the ordinance of foot washing at 10:30 a.m. Then we walked to Farnbanks, purchased a ticket, which cost us 50 cents each, to Hampton, Bradford County. We changed cars at Waldo, waited about 2 hours, and then we went down to Hampton, arriving there at about 4 p.m. When we went to the home of Mr. Joseph Sutton and found him pulling fodder. We had some fine melons and supper. Then we went to dream of home, loved ones, and our future labors.

#### Friday and Saturday, July 16, 17 Bradford County, Florida

We remained at Hampton sleeping at Mr. Sutton's all the time, as they had a large house with a fine bed covered with net to keep off the mosquitoes.

#### Monday, July 19

After dinner we started out in the country and after walking about two miles, we came to a lake about 1 1/2 miles square which went by the name of Santiffe. A heavy thunder shower came up, so we stripped off our clothes and went in the lake while the rain was falling heavily. After swimming around for half an hour, we dressed and continued on for about three miles and stayed at the house of Mr. Wiley Jones.

#### July 20-26

These days were spent holding meetings at the Sparkman School House in the Jones Settlement and visiting friends. We feel that we aroused a great interest and that our labors will bear fruit in the near future.

#### Saturday, July 31

We walked 10 miles beneath a scorching sun and arrived at New Zion where we met Elders L.W. Lund, and R.L. Lewis. We stayed at the home of Nels Dowling.

#### Sunday, August 1

We fasted all day and held two meetings at New Zion School House. We also held the first Sunday School that was held in Bradford County, Florida. Elders Lund and Lewis organized this school and named it Lydia Beatrice. These are the names of their wives. After the meeting, Elder Lewis and I went home with Mr. Dowling.

#### Tuesday, August 3

After meeting at the school house (New Zion), Elder

Gee and I went home with the Watson family and sat up until 1 o'clock talking on the Gospel.

#### Wednesday, August 4

At 9 a.m. we all met at the New Zion Church to hold another meeting. After we dismissed the meeting, Elder Holtsclaw and I went home with Hump Williams.

#### Thursday, August 5

I went to Hagen in Mr. Dowling's cart. Elder Holtsclaw went with me after returning to New Zion. I bid the Elders goodbye and went to the home of Brother John Murphy, where I met my companion L.W. Lund. Before we left Brother Murphy's we ordained him a Priest. I was mouth. After dinner we walked 6 miles and stayed with Mr. W. Andrews at Midway.

#### August 6-8

These days we spent in the Delke Settlement holding meetings at the Brooks and Midway School Houses. On Sunday the 8th, we baptized Miss Maggie Walker at the Delke Mill and held a meeting at Brother John Walker's place at night.

#### Monday, August 9

We held a Sacrament meeting at Brother Walkers, then we walked about 5 miles and stayed at the house of Samuel Carver who proved a great friend, a helper in the opening of Lake Butler.

#### Tuesday, August 10

We entered Lake Butler, visited the mayor, who granted us permission to canvass the city. We received the use of the Academy to hold our meeting, and spoke to a large congregation that night. We went home with Mr. Crocker and had dinner with Mr. Odeur, one of the most prominent men of Lake Butler.

#### August 13-17

These days were spent in and around Lake Butler holding meetings on the streets and in the Academy and a vacant store. Our labors in Butler were a complete success. We feel much good had been done and that several baptisms will be the results of our labors. The nights were spent principally at the home of F.J. Crocker who proved to be a friend indeed.

#### August 18-20

Waiting on Elders to join us in preparatory to starting for Pines, Hamilton County where we were to meet in Priesthood meeting with several Georgia Elders.

#### August 21

I went to the office before purchasing ticket and found a letter from Elder Fisher asking me to come to a Highland, Clay County to meet him there before start-



ing to Pines, Hamilton County. We left Lake Butler early in the morning in company with Mr. Wm Andress, who had agreed to take us to Highland a distance of 30 miles for \$2. We traveled through some of the loveliest timber scenery that I have seen in the South. We reached Highland, a small town on the Fernandina RR. At about sundown we went three miles out of town and stayed with Elisha Sand, at whose house we remained all the next day.

#### Monday, August 23

At noon when Elders Fisher and Brown came we found a train almost ready to pull out on a train road running exactly in the direction we wanted to go. After we reached the end of the road, we shouldered our grips, walked three miles and arrived at the house of Mr. John Sapp about dark, where we remained all night, but didn't sleep on account of the bed bugs and mosquitoes.

#### Tuesday, August 24

After breakfast we left Mr. Sapp's place, walked 10 miles, and arrived at Sanderson, Baker County, at noon. We ate dinner with Brother Henry Wester. After dinner we started out and walked two miles to the water. When we came to that we could not cross without taking off our clothes. Just as we got through dressing, Brother Hill came up with his wife and said he had come to haul us to Godwin's Ranch, a distance of 10 miles, which saved us a long walk in the water. We held a meeting that night at the home of Mr. Godwin.

#### Wednesday, August 25

We walked 18 miles through swamps and grass and arrived at Brother George Keen's late in the afternoon, completely exhausted from our long hard tramp. On our way we passed though a logging camp where Mr. John Paul was getting out 300 logs a day and sent them to Waller Town (\*Watertown) to his mill where that amount of logs were sawed into lumber daily.

#### Thursday, August 26

We stayed at Brother Keen's until late in the afternoon having our clothes washed. Then we walked down to the Suwannee Valley and stayed at Brother Wright's place but he was out traveling with Elder L.A. Stevenson Supt. of Sunday Schools. We arrived at the Valley waiting for mail from President Cutler until Sept. 2nd. We visited the Saints at Artight, Palmetta, and on the Benton via Oak Grove. We had three baptisms: Mrs. Rimmer, Mrs. Register and her daughter. At Artight a large crowd gathered to witness the baptism of Mrs. Jessica Raulerson. I did the baptizing. The next morning we went to the house of Brother Raulerson and blessed his five little girls, thus ending an 8 day trip in northern part of Columbia County. On the morning of the 14th

we started for Georgia to open the city of Valdosta and held a meeting the night of the 16th at the home of R.H. Hagan. We arrived at Valdosta on the evening of the 17th, but before entering the city, we went into a shady grove and dedicated the city, ourselves, and all we have to the Lord. In Valdosta we stayed with Brother Netry (?), a wealthy Georgian that I baptized in Florida. I here take a few lines of my journal to give a brief outline of our late work in the city of Valdosta, Georgia. My first companion is W.G. Fisher. We arrived at the city Sept. 18 and dedicated it to the Lord, and asked his blessings to attend us in our efforts to discriminate (?) the principles of Truth, the Plan of Salvation and life to the souls of the children of men. We first went to the home of Brother Fry, where we received a hearty welcome. We remained there until Monday, when we commenced work. First, we visited the Chief of Police, Mr. Dampa. He seemed to be very kind and said we would have no trouble in the city. Next, we turned our attention to the Mayor, Mr. Smith. He gave us permission to canvass the city and said for us to preach whenever an opportunity presented itself. Our next step was to visit Valdosta Times, a newspaper. They gave us a nice write-up and everything seemed to go our way. We secured the Court House to preach in. Then we visited the three hotels: Prescott, Stewart, and Central. All gave us a standing invitation to call on them whenever we wished to. We then proceeded to canvass the business street, which was Paterson, and the Lord went before us and seemed to open the homes and hearts of the people. Tuesday night we held a meeting in the Opera House, the finest building in the city. Mr. Prescott let us have the building free and Brother Fry paid for the electric lights. We held several meetings in the Court House and one on the street, at which a larger crowd was present. Mr. Griffin, who kept a private boarding house, was very kind to us and opened his doors to us and seemed to take an interest in the Gospel, also his family. Brother Fry was very kind to us. He furnished us money to pay our laundry bills and when we got ready to leave the city, he purchased a ticket to the Suwannee Valley. On the p.m. that we left Valdosta, we went out into a shady grove, where was a nice little branch running. There in humble prayer we asked God to bless those who had received us kindly and to forgive those who had rejected us and the message we bear. Then we washed our feet as a testimony against those that refused to listen to us. We bid our friends goodbye and boarded the southbound train for Florida. We arrived at Brown Station at Suwannee Valley where we met Brother Wright and went home with him. We preached the Gospel to the conductor nearly all the way from Valdosta to Brown and gave him a Voice of Warning and a tract. We found that

much good has been accomplished in the city of Valdosta and that the seed that has been sown will eventually bear fruit if it is carefully watered by other Elders, and God sees fit to give the increase. I believe that it is one of the most complete captures in the South.

#### Thursday, October 7

We left Suwannee Valley and commenced our tramp through the flat woods to Taylor, a little settlement on the middle prong of the St. Mary's River, where we expected to meet Elders H.C. Blood, and William J. Shakespear. On our way we held a meeting at the home of Lewis Peroatt (\*Prevatt). The next morning we passed the great logging camps of Mr. Pauls and arrived at Taylor about 3 p.m. and found the Elders had not come. We remained in that neighborhood until Thursday Oct. 14, holding meetings each night. On the 15th we walked over to Sanderson, a distance of 19 miles, where we had an enjoyable time with the Saints. At this little place we had a branch of the Church and a Sunday School organized, and they are doing well. My companion, Elder Shakespear, arrived on the night of the 17th and we held several meetings while at Sanderson. When we got ready to leave, Sister Cobb gave Elder S. a RR ticket and Sister Canova presented me with one. So we boarded the westbound train for Lake City where we arrived at noon. Then we walked to Bro. Wright's. We shall always feel grateful to Sister Canova and Sister Cobb, and invoke the blessings of God upon them for their liberality, for they saved us a long wet walk in the flat woods. And we shall always remember sisters Adaline and Katy Canova for entertaining us so nicely with piano and the many songs they sang for us.

#### Monday, October 18

Brother E.H. Redding at Live Oak presented us with \$3.50 to pay our way from Greenville, Madison Co., to Tallahassee, Leon County. On the 24th we walked from Live Oak, Suwannee Co., to Lee Station in Madison. On the way we stopped at Ellaville, a little place situated at the junction Withlocoochee and Suwannee rivers, and had a bath, then journeyed on to stay all night with Bro. Williams, near Lee. Sunday the 24th we reached Bro. George Norris's place near Madison City after walking 14 miles without eating anything. On the 25th we walked up to Greenville expecting to board the westbound train, but it was an hour late so we walked up the track a mile and stayed all night at the home of Tom Drew. The 26th we caught the westbound train and ran down to Tallahassee, a distance of 40 miles thus saving us two days hard walking through a county where there was but few friends. We arrived in Tallahassee about 4 p.m. We walked out into the country 5 miles to the home of Br. Robert D. Humphries. On Sat Oct 30th

Pres Cutler and I visited Gov. Blaxham in the capital and had a nice chat with him. Then we visited both newspapers, the Tallahassee and Floridier, and received them free of charge. The Mayor, Mr. Shine, told us to go ahead and he would see that we were protected. We found all the City officers very agreeable men. On Monday night, Nov. 1st we stayed at the Leon Hotel, the largest in the city. We were unable to get lodgings in the city after the first night, so we were compelled to walk out 5 miles to the home of Bro. Robert L. Humphries. We visited about 25 families per day and walked 12 miles. In 12 days we distributed 330 tracts, sold and gave away 33 books, held 22 meetings and engaged in about 40 Gospel conversations. We feel that the gospel has been established and much good has been done in that city notwithstanding. Elders Nebeker and Rogers had been run out of Tallahassee two years before. As a general thing our meetings were slimly attended by white people, although we generally had some of the business men at our meetings. Darkies, we had in abundance, would sometimes shout at the top of their voices their approval. We were unable to procure a house to preach in. We applied for the Opera House, but were told that it would cost us \$10 per night and we, being without purse or script, could not use it, but contented ourselves with street corners from which we proclaimed the doctrines of Christ with all the power we could and we were told by a business man by the name of Snooks that we had accomplished a great work in the city in the way of breaking down walls of prejudice and showing our true position religiously and socially. On the day of the 10th, we preached until after dark and just as we got through, Bro. Humphries drove up in a buggy and took us home with him. The day following we traveled 8 miles and stayed all night with John C. Mantford. On the 12th we left Mr. Mantford's and started for Ashville, Jefferson County, a distance of 20 miles. We crossed over the line and stayed with Mr. Richent. At noon on the day following, we reached Ashville where we were to leave our house and buggy. We remained in the Hassel Settlement and Ashville until the morning of 23rd, then traveled over to Georgia.

(Isom's journal relates work in Georgia by the Elders, and one man, Mr. Booth named their baby Isom Cutler.)

#### Wednesday, December 16

We started for Benton, Columbia County, Florida but had to wade so many swamps we only reached Soakmuir, two isolated houses in the flat woods where we were entertained by Mr. John Bennett. On Saturday, Dec 18th we reached Benton, lame and sore, and badly jaded by our hard walk. The following day being Sunday, we called the Saints together at the home of Bro. George Kirkland and did some preaching. By invitation Mr.



Rolfe, an Advent Minister (Seventh-Day) occupied half the time. On Sunday evening we walked out to Sycamore and preached 4 sermons at the home of Millage Hall. The Spirit seemed to be in our midst and we spoke with power. When we dismissed our meeting, Mr. and Mrs. Dunance (Durrance) came up to me and applied for baptism. After making arrangements to do the baptizing on the following Sunday, we stretched ourselves out for the night to dream of home and the work before us. On Monday we went to the home of John Avery where Bro. Rogerson was lying sick and we administered to him. We went on to Palmetta and held a meeting at the home of Isaac Josiah Tucker and stayed all night with Elias Waldron. On the 21st we continued on. We reached Bro. George Keen's place where we stayed all night. On 22nd after visiting several families and having an application for baptism (Mrs. Brannen) we reached Suwannee Valley the home of Bro. James Wright staying until Dec 27th. I ate my Christmas Dinner at Bro. Wright's and carved the turkey. Elders Jeffries, Holtsclaw, Tanner, and Olson were present. We had an enjoyable time devouring the scrumptious feast that Sister Wright had prepared. Elder Tanner and I started out early Sunday morning and walked 12 miles and met a nice little crowd at the Oak Church. We preached 3 sermons to the people. Then I led Mr. and Mrs. Durrance into the waters of baptism. The water was extremely cold, but they both manifested good faith, and that overcomes every obstacle that may be placed in one's path. After the baptism we all went to the home of Bro. Durrance to hold our Sacrament meeting, and teach the new Saints their duties. We remained at Brother Durrance's all night. The next morning, Dec. 27, before we left, Bro and Sis Durrance wished us to bless their children which we did. We walked to Palmetta and took dinner with Elias Waldron. We reached 'Cachall' the home of Bro. Keen and family where we stayed. Before leaving Bro. Keen's we ground some sugar cane through the mill and had a drink of juice. This was cane the Saints had saved for us. Then we went over to the home of Bro. Raulerson and found his baby very sick, so we administered to it and went on to Suwannee Valley where we met our companions, also Elders W.H. Summerhays and Uta Griffin. The latter was sick with the fever, so we administered to him, also Sis. Nixon. I sat up until 3 o'clock in the morning with the sick and improved the time by writing letters and straightening up my journal preparatory to going to Conference at Sanderson.

### Wednesday, December 30

Elder Albert Jeffries and I started out for Lake City, where we arrived in time to catch the evening train for Sanderson. We went by the home of Brother George P.

Canova, where we found several Elders. I spoke in the Parlor that night to a nice congregation and retired at a late hour.

### Thursday, December 31

We spent the day in Sanderson, practicing some hymns and preparing for the morrow when we were to have our spiritual Feast.

Note: The Elder Gee mentioned in this journal was the eldest brother of Cleone Smith, Isom's mother. His name was Elias A. Gee.

## MISSIONARY RECORD OF SAMUEL ISOM BOOK TWO (IN PART)

### Saturday, January 1, 1898

The New Year of 1898 dawned bright and cold and found 48 Elders packed in the little Town of Sanderson for the purpose of holding their annual conference with the Saints and friends, Elder Frank H. Cutler presiding. In 1897 souls were baptized, four branches of the Church and eight Sunday Schools were organized. Apostle Lyman preached a discourse impressing his hearers with the fact that the Holy Spirit will not dwell where there is an absence of charity, truth, and virtue, the speaker blessed the people of Florida and said those of the South were noted for their hospitality.

### Sunday January 2

(Details of program and songs given but deleted here for space) Monday and Tuesday were spent in Priesthood meeting where we received timely instructions from the visiting brethren, and where our fields of labor, we all go into the southern part of the state where the gospel has never been heard from the lips of a Mormon Elder. Elder Hyrum Olsen of Mayfield, San Pete County, was assigned to labor with me in Pinellas County, Florida. We left Sanderson on Jan 7 and walked 18 miles and stayed at the house of T.J. Crocker at Lake Butler, Bradford County, the day following, 8th we walked 18 miles and arrived at the home of Jos. Sutton, where we remained until the morning of the 11th. While there at Hampton I baptized Sister Josephine Andresk in the Saulifee Lake. The reason of our long stay at Hampton was a two day fast that had been appointed and we did not wish to travel while we were fasting. We held meetings every night while at Hampton, there being 10 Elders present. Before leaving Mr. Sutton's he requested us to administer to him as he had been afflicted for a long time. Accordingly, we administered to him and he was healed. Mr. Sutton desired that I should be



mouth. We could not leave until after dinner on account of our clothes not being ready. Elder Randall was taken ill very suddenly and we administered to him before leaving. My companion and I reached Brooklin's about 6 p.m. We asked the merchant if he could entertain us and he said no, but told us if we would go on about a mile that he thought we could get entertainment at the home of Mr. Smith, which we did. Mr. Smith treated us very kindly, but he didn't care to hear us talk on the gospel.

#### Wednesday, January 12

After leaving Mr. Smith we followed the G.S. & F Railroad to Putnam Hall where we had dinner with Mr. Padget and had the privilege of an orange from his train. After dinner we journeyed on and stayed all night with Mr. Ganito at Hollister Station on the Gainesville Railroad. Jan 13 we continued on down the railroad, and stayed within two miles of Palatka at the home of Mr. Padget. I would state here that on entering our county we went into a secluded spot in a shady grove and dedicated the county to the people, ourselves and all we have unto the Lord, involving his blessings upon the land and people and ourselves as we always do when entering into a field of labor.

#### Friday, January 14

We set out to enter our city, we found Palatka a much larger city than we thought it was, Pop. 4000. We visited the post office, received mail, then visited the Mayor, Mr. George Gay, obtained permission to canvass the city and preach whenever an opportunity presented itself. Then we visited the Kimball, Arlington and Graham Hotels. At the first two we were refused entertainment, but Mr. Reynolds, proprietor of the Graham Hotel agreed to furnish us meals, but could not furnish us bed. We visited a boarding house kept by Mrs. Clay. She promised to lodge us two nights. Then we went to the Court House, had a long talk with Judge Coxe and Justice Rowton, sold each of them a Voice of Warning and then we broke our fast at the Graham Hotel, then went to our room tired boys.

#### Saturday, January 15

We visit several offices, two hotels, Cannonball and Central, were promised entertainment at both, tried to get the court house, but the sheriff was out of town, so we could not make any arrangements. We canvassed one of the principle streets, distributed 50 tracts, had an appointment to speak at the home of John De Loosh, but ap't failed and we went back to our boarding house for the night feeling the Lord was merciful unto us, for which we never fail to thank Him.

January 16-23 spent canvassing town of Palatka, eating and sleeping where citizens were willing to give food and shelter.

#### January 24

We left the home of Mr. Steward and went into the Francis Settlement, thinking to canvass it; preached there. About 6 o'clock p.m. we called at the home, or a little boarding house, kept by Mrs. Columbia Zigler, and told her that we were representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; not understanding that we were Mormons, she gave us a hearty invitation to stay with her. As soon as she found that we were Mormons, she regretted taking us in and went out and made arrangements with a mob to come and move us. Two men by the name of Crawford and Browning entered the house and ask us if we intended to pay the lady for our supper and bed. We informed them that we travelled strictly without purse or script and that it be impossible for us to do so. Then said, "The sooner you hit the grit the better it will be for you." We tried to reason with them, but they said they hadn't time to argue with such low down hypocrites as we were. We told the lady, I can call her such, that when we found friends, we would send her pay for the supper, which we did. We apologized to the old lady and went out into the dark in search of a place to stop. After stumbling through the woods for about a mile, we came to the home of Marion Smith who said that a Christian should be a stranger in no land, and he received us very kindly knowing that 'he that receiveth a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.' We know that God will bless those who will provide for his servants.

#### Tuesday, January 26

We canvassed all the houses near Lundy Station; we were refused entertainment five or six times, so we went back into Palatka, and we were kindly entertained by Mr. Tom Brown.

#### Sunday, January 30

After holding meetings and distributing tracts we walked back into the city and took dinner at the Cannonball Hotel. Mr. Frank P. Appleby is proprietor of this hotel. He and his wife have been very kind to us while in the city. They have furnished us with a house to preach in and many nights lodging for which we invoke the blessings of the Lord upon them.

#### Tuesday, January 31

Isom and his companion continued to canvass the Palatka area, seeking lodging and food and places to preach. They were entertained by citizens by the names of Wing, Stewart, Walkins, Preston Prevatts, Kean, James Tucker, Weeks, Slaughter, Pullen, Dick Baker,

Dan Steward, McMan, W.H. Chalfinch, Phillips, John Green in the settlements of Crystal Lake School, Pamona, Como, Fruitland, Satsuma, Buffalo Bluff, Welaka, Georgetown and Buffalo Bluff.

#### Friday, February 11

Mr. Stewart's hired man, a darkey, cooked us some breakfast after which we continued canvassing until we reached the home of John Rogen. We took Mr. Rogen's boat and crossed the lake a distance of a mile and a half to notify some families of the opposite side of the lake of our appointment.

#### Saturday, February 12

We completed the canvass of Pamona, then went down the track to Como, had dinner with Parson Miller, failed to secure a house to preach in, so we went out to Mr. John Green's house in Fruitland Settlement where we remained until Monday morning.

#### Monday, February 14

We resumed canvassing, took dinner with William Kirkland and took supper and lodgings at the home of John Cartor. From Feb 14th to Mar 3rd we labored along banks of the St. John's River in the towns of Welaka, Fruitland, and Georgetown. While preaching at the latter place we converted Mr. and Mrs. Turner from Jacksonville, but on account of sickness, we haven't baptized them yet. We were attacked by Ministers Pace and Woodworth who did all they could to destroy our influence and to a great extent they were successful, though we had friends in each settlement to provide for us while we held our meetings and warned the ungodly of the judgment that awaited them. A lady by the name of Broad in Welaka furnished us a long hall to preach in and the merchants furnished us lights at Ridgewood. We preached in a store owned by Mr. Parsh. Mr. and Mrs. Basford were our best friends in that neighborhood. Though prejudice ran high, we felt that we dispelled a great deal of it in the short time that we were there. Fruitland was our Post Office, the mail came up the river once a day on the steamer. The beautiful steamer, Jacksonville, made a trip each day carrying passengers. It is a beautiful site on a dark night to see it coming up the river like a lovely floating palace literally glittering with electricity.

#### Saturday, March 19

We had an early breakfast. We went to the home of Mr. Chalfinch who had said he would row us all over the St. John's River. We jumped into the boat about 7 a.m. and sailed down by seven beautiful islands called the Seven Sisters. The shores of the river were fringed with all manner of beautiful trees and the long gray moss waved in the gentle morning breeze. The wild hyacinth

looked like a beautiful carpet spread upon the water with an occasional bayonet or pond lily rearing its majestic head. The song of the mocking bird greeted us as we drifted along. The fish were leaping and splashing in the water. Everything seemed to show evidences of the skillful touch of the master workman. We canvass the Penile and Wild Settlements but no one came out. We stayed all night at J.C. Stuart's.

#### Thursday, March 24

We walked along a country road for four miles when we came to Saumeto( \*San Mateo), a little town on the eastern bank of St. John's River. We visited the supervisor of the school; he insulted us and refused us the use of the school house. We failed to get a church and canvassed until night. We were refused entertainment six times, but finally got in at the home of Mrs. Wells.

#### Friday, March 25

After fighting bed bugs all night, we got up, had breakfast, and walked out to Yelvington Station, a little settlement on the East Coast Railroad. Stayed all night at home of Mr. Mikell.

#### Saturday, March 26

After a very light breakfast, for I was not feeling well, we walked five miles to San Mateo to complete canvass. We walked to Yelvington and stayed all night with Mr. Ed Yelvington.

#### Monday, March 28

Held a meeting at 7 p.m. at home of Henry Yelvington.

#### Tuesday, March 29

After bidding goodbye to people at Yelvington Station we walked down the East Coast RR to East Palatka. We walked down to Orange Mills Plowing and Saw Mills. We met a crowd of infidels who wanted us to preach for the darkies. We had a long conversation with them on the divinity of Christ's mission. We stayed all night with Geo. W. Baker. We spent evening chatting on the gospel and playing with a couple of monkeys that Mr. Baker had. He also had a Warren Well stacked with Belgian Hares.

#### Thursday, March 31

We canvassed families at Federal Point, nearly all the houses there are large and beautiful mansions built by wealthy Northerners. I learned I was to meet President Cutler at Hampton, Bradford County on March 5.

#### Friday, April 1

We walked down to the wharf to put up a flag to notify the captain of the little steamer to come to the eastern bank of the river. Miss Lallie Baker accompanied



us down to the wharf to see us off. We had a ten mile run up the river where grand old southern mansions are situated in midst of lovely orange groves. We stayed all night at the home of Mr. John Vinsau.

#### Tuesday, April 5

Elders Summerhays and Parker came. We held a Priesthood at the home of Joseph Sutton. We all took supper at the home of Taylor Audress and held meetings at Bro Sutton where we remained all night.

#### Wednesday, April 6

Pres Cutler and Elton went to Starke, Elder Summerhays and I remained at Hampton to baptize Brother J.W. Sutton, which we did in the Sautiffee Lake at 11 a.m. on April 6th. We remained at Bro Sutton's until noon. In the afternoon we walked out to the Sautiffee Lake, a distance of three miles, to where there was a little bath house situated on the shore of the lake; there I had the privilege of leading Brother and Sister Durden into the waters of baptism. That evening we confirmed them members of the Church and I blessed their baby boy.

#### Monday, April 11

After breakfast I wrote a letter to Mrs. Crocker at Lake Butler, then walked over to Mrs. Wigg's home, a large southern mansion, where we conversed on gospel until noon. Then the old lady and her daughter, Addie, prepared a nice lunch for us, and brought it into the parlor, after which, Addie played us several times on the violin, while the old lady chatted freely on the gospel and the late war and slavery times. Her father had at one time owned 1100 Negroes. We stayed all night in Palatka with John Vinsau.

#### Wednesday, April 13

After singing a few hymns for the Baker family we walked over to Mr. Dancy's and had a long talk with him and his wife. Mr. Dancy seemed greatly interested, but his wife seemed to be alarmed and said she did not want us to remember her even in our prayers for said she, "I know you have power and if you should ask God to change me, I believe He would do it and I want to remain as I am." After our conversation closed, we went out into the strawberry patch and had a juvenile feast, walked on to Federal Point; met the post master, an atheist, and conversed with him for over an hour. He said, "You have incorporated in your gospel all the Bible truths that any other sect has and many that they don't have, besides all the great revelations given to Joseph Smith." We left an apt. to preach in the school house on the following evening, then went out and canvassed the settlement where we were refused entertainment. We walked 5 miles to Hastings and stayed with Mr. Thigpen.

#### Thursday, April 14

We arose about 5 a.m. had breakfast and set out for Federal Point and found quite a crowd of Northern men all anxious to know something about what the Mormons believed and we told them the gospel from a Bible stand point. Mr. Hodges, a wealthy land and lumber owner, invited us out to his log camp three miles further. Mr. Bullard, the tax assessor, was also invited. We reached the camp which consisted of six or seven lumber shanties and a blacksmith shop. Mr. Hodges has about a mile and half of railroad built on piles driven in the mud from 30-40 feet. We jumped on the train and found ourselves flying through the dark swamp on this little elevated railroad. When we arrived at the place Mr. Hodges had two large machines standing, one for loading logs, the other for dragging them to the road. It would be useless for me to try to describe this machinery but suffice it to say a large pair of tongs would run on out one and two hundred yards from the plant on a wire cable and would actually pick up a log that would make 2000 feet of lumber and drag it to the road knocking down trees as it came to them. We arrived back at Federal Point about sundown pretty well jaded and covered with mud. At the school house we began our meeting and the spirit seemed to be poured out upon us. Before retiring at Mr. Hodges' we had a bowl of bread and milk which greatly satisfied the natural man.

#### Friday, April 15

Mr. Tummy an infidel asked me how it was that we had such remarkable memories. I referred him to some scriptures that told him we claimed to be aided by that spirit. When we shook hands with the old gentleman he left 50 cents in each of our hands.

#### Sunday, April 24

We struck out for George Town, a distance of five miles, where we were to baptize Mr. and Mrs. Turner. We arrived at Mr. Turner's camp where he was getting a raft of logs off to Jacksonville about 10 a.m.. We conversed with Mr. and Mrs. Turner on the duties of Saints until after dinner. When the rain eased we went down to the shores of Lake George which was just a few hundred yards from the house and led Brother\* and Sister Turner down into the waters of baptism. They rode back to their home in their carriage while I went into a little cabin close by and changed my clothes. Elder Elton and I talked with our new converts on their duties, confirmed the members, bid them good-bye and walked to Fruitland and preached at the home of John Carter.

\*See Sanderson Journal for letter written by Brother Turner complaining about the Church and Elder Isom's baptism.

### Monday, April 25

We bid the friends at Fruitland goodbye and struck out for Huntington, canvassing all the houses as we went. On the way we stopped and talked a long time with Mr. Payne, a wealthy gentleman from the North. When we got ready to leave, he said he wished us to sample his sardines, so he gave us a can each to put in our pocket for lunch, which we ate by the roadside. We intended to stay at Huntington all night and preach, but Doctor Hall, an old baldheaded Englishman had charge of the school house and being an Episcopalian, would not let us have it. We walked to Crescent City tired and hungry. We stayed with a man by the name of Frank Thurber who treated us very kindly.

### Thursday, April 28

We fasted all day and at 7:30 we administered to Mrs. Fannie Thurber. She was afflicted with a large tumor on her side.

April 29-May 8 Elders canvass Palatka area communities, teaching and preaching.

### Monday, May 9

Before leaving Mr. Turner's, Miss Sallie, his sister, wished us to administer to her which we did. Then we walked to Mr. Varnes's home and were surprised to have Mrs. Varnes and her sister, Miss Higginbotham, come to us and apply for baptism. We spent night at the Varnes's.

### Tuesday, May 10

After dinner a lady by the name of Weaver came in to the house and assailed us on the Gospel. The room began to be filled up with about 30 people in all to witness the baptism. It became evident that our lady combatant had come over for the express purpose of denouncing our gospel, and poisoning the minds of the people. The old lady waxed hot and became angry because she said we were confusing her saying 'that is wasn't fair for two men to pick on an old rattle brained woman'. So I begged her pardon and told her to tell the people all she knew concerning the Mormons. She did so telling the blackest falsehoods imaginable. Then I followed her keeping to the law and testimony showing the people the real status of affairs. She, being completely over-thrown, had nothing more to say. I believe the little discussion was productive of much good. We then attended to the baptism. Lake Mormon was the scene of action. Only one person was baptized, Mellisa Higginbotham. I led her into the water and Elder Elton confirmed her afterwards in Mr. Varnes's house.

### Thursday, May 12

With umbrella in hand set my face towards to the chilly north. On our way to Ponomia, Elder Elton spied a

hard-shelled cooter; I picked him up and carried him to Mr. Rogen's where I had him taken out of the shell and the shell sent home to my wife.

### May 14, 15, 16

We spent our time at Buffalo Bluff, holding meetings, having our washing done and wrote seven gospel letters a night to Saints in different parts of Florida.

### May 16-May 27

### Saturday, May 28

Elder George S. Freestane, my new companion from Arizona, and I walked to the Wylds Settlement. We took dinner with the Shuabels family and supper with the Brydson family then held a meeting in the school house. James Brydson applied for baptism.

### Sunday, May 29

At 10 a.m. we in company with James Brydson, Sarah Vinsau, Elizabeth Pullin, and a large crowd of people met on what is known as Wiggs Lake for the purpose of baptizing the above named persons.

### Thursday, June 2

Soon after breakfast in Pamonia we set out for Crescent City where we found our friends awfully perplexed over some evil reports concerning our people and doctrines we preached. We visited in the home of several friends and cleared away the rubbish that had been heaped upon them by our enemies during our absence and we strengthened Sister Higginbotham's faith who had almost been discouraged by the storm of opposition that had been hurled against her by ministers.

### Sunday, June 5

At 11 a.m. we attended services at the Presbyterian Church conducted by the Rev. Potter. He reviled us a little, but by so doing, he made friends for us. We held two interesting meetings at Denver where several applications for baptism were made.

### Tuesday, June 7

We walked out in the country a few miles, did some canvassing, took dinner and supper with Frank Thurber, and at 7:30 p.m. we spoke to a large congregation in the VIP Hall which had been hired by some of our friends. At the close of the meeting, several applications for baptism were made, and one lady by the name of Smith, who had never heard us before, expressed herself as being thoroughly converted to the gospel as we taught it, and she said she would be ready when we returned.

### Wednesday, June 8

We walked over to Denver to attend to the baptizing. I went to a little store kept by Bro. Wood, and he



furnished me a change of clothes; then we walked to a little lake nearby where about 50 persons met to witness the baptism. As usual we held a short meeting on the shore of the lake in which the principles of baptism of the water and spirit were explained. After, I led Brother Turner, Sister Audres, Sister Thurber, and Sister Rallerson into the waters of baptism. Before leaving the grounds, Brother Daniel Turner gave us a present of six dollars, and several others gave us small amounts among who was Sister M. Higginbotham, Amice Lungren, and Mr. Frank Thurber. After leaving the grounds, we reported to the home of Bro Suphin Turner where we administered to 8 persons who were afflicted. After dinner we bid the people goodbye, left them in tears and walked over to the depot to catch the evening train. While waiting Mr. Woods gave me a fine shirt, three pairs of socks, and a linen collar. In a few minutes the train came in and we were soon plumped down in soft cushions and flying along towards Pamona with light hearts feeling that God had been with us through the day, and that consolation to an Elder to see honest souls brought into the fold we shouldered our grips and walked two miles around Lake Broward, and spent the night with John Rogen, where we feasted on fresh fish and strawberries.

#### Thursday, June 9

We struck out for the Wyles Settlement west of Palatka where we had a baptism appointment. We arrived at the home of Mr. Brydson at noon.

#### Friday, June 10

Mrs. Brydson and myself dyed and pressed my summer clothes, and all preparations were made for the baptism tomorrow.

#### Sunday, June 12

At 10 a.m. a large crowd congregated on the shore of Wiggs Lake to witness the baptism of Sister Brydson, Sister Basford, and Brother Chalfinch. While I was doing the baptizing, an old lady of color stood on the shore shouting glory to God and Jesus Christ and praising those who were being baptized.

#### Tuesday, June 14

Just as we were getting ready to leave the home of Mr. Brydson, the Presbyterian Minister, Mr. Hays, came to show Sister Brydson that she had taken a step in joining the Mormon Church that would prove her destruction unless she repented and that speedily. I soon gave him to understand that she had accepted the true gospel of Christ. Sister Brydson told him that she had experienced a joy and satisfaction that never came to her in the Presbyterian Church that convinced her that she was safe

and did not need his aid. Our long talk caused us to miss the boat going to Orange Mills.

#### Sunday, June 19

On Sunday we witnessed the baptism of a colored lady who cut a shine when she came out of the water that came nearly knocking two preachers down. Several of the old sisters of color took her in hand and led her away shouting holy the whole time.

#### Monday, June 20

We packed our grips and walked down to Palatka preparatory to going into the Rice Creek Settlement to begin canvassing, but on arriving at the office, I was surprised to find a letter from President Elias S. Kimball notifying me that I would be released to go home in three days. Accordingly we abandoned the trip to Rice Creek and prepared to visit friends in old fields.

#### Sunday, June 26

We held meetings at 3 and 7:30 p.m. It was desired by the Saints that I should take a pamphlet that had been distributed by our enemies and explain it before that public, which I did to the satisfaction of the people. The pamphlet was called 'Ten Reasons Why We Cannot Fellowship the Mormons'.

#### Monday, June 27

We set out for Crescent City visiting friends on the reach. We reached Crescent City at 10 a.m. and found Mr. Francis Thurber and Mrs. Alice Sherly ready for baptism. We hadn't far to go, but like Phillip and the Eumach of old, we found water near by for the town is situated between Lakes Crescent and Stella. The notice was short, but we had a good sized congregation. I led the above named persons into the waters of baptism. We had dinner with Sister Ida Anders, bid Saints and friends goodbye and set out for Pamona, a distance of 10 miles. Mrs. Rogen was expecting us and the table was loaded with good wholesome food, fresh trout seemed to disappear faster than anything else. We always look for a feast of fish when we go to Mr. Rogen's.

#### Tuesday, June 28

We received several letters, one from President John Z. Brown informing me that I was expected to leave Putnam Co. on July 4th and meet him at New Zion in Bradford Co. as early as possible, so that he could see me before I started for home. Elder Ross B. Cutler was to take my place in Putnam Co.

Next few days spent visiting friends and Saints

#### Friday, July 1

We spent day at home of Bro Brydson. We visited Mr. and Mrs. Baker who had come from Orange Mills

to attend our meetings, and while we were there, Mrs. Baker requested to be baptized.

### Sunday, July 3

At 10 a.m. a large crowd met at Wiggs Lake to witness the baptism when I led Sisters Walker, Baker and Phillips, and Brother Brydson into the waters of baptism.

### Monday, July 4

We started for Palatka very early, purchased a ticket for Hampton at the depot and in a few minutes the train pulled out.

### Tuesday, July 5

Elder Poineray and I, after bidding the Saints and friends goodbye, purchased a RR ticket and rode up to Lake Butler, and took dinner at the home of Bro. T.J. Cracker whose wife was to be baptized on the morrow. Elder Robbins and I remained with Bro R.N. Dowling and being the first time we had met for six months, we of course talked nearly all night.

### Wednesday, July 6

The school house was crowded with people all anxious to hear my farewell sermon. President Brown and I spent the night together at Bro. Nelce Dowlings. Elders Gee, Fanx, and Phillips came during our meeting which was a surprise.

### Thursday, July 7

I intended to board the early morning train at Hagen Station, but the Elders prevailed on me to stay another day with them and by doing so I had the privilege of baptizing four more honest Saints into the fold of Christ. Three of them had been waiting for several months for me to come and perform the ordinance of baptism. I intended to leave on the evening train after our meeting which was held in a shady grove near the Olustee Bridge in which I did the speaking, but I stayed over.

### Friday, July 8

I walked out to the Hagen station and when the train rolled up I bid the brethren goodbye and jumped aboard.

### Monday, July 11

I continued my visiting in the northern part of Columbia, but the rains compelled me to abandon the idea of seeing all my friends before leaving the South. Mr. Serd Kun came along and I jumped into the buggy with him and rode into Lake City where I stayed until the next morning with Bro. and Sis. Pullin.

### Tuesday, July 12

At about 9 a.m. I bid Bro. and Sis. Pullin goodbye and walked over to the G.S. & F Depot. I was surprised

to find Bro. J.B. Wright there. We purchased our tickets and rode to the valley together while I remained until the morning of the 14th. Then Bro. Wright took me to Lake City; I purchased a ticket for Greenville, Madison Co., where I was to meet Elder Frank Smith my traveling companion. At 3 p.m. I arrived at Greenville, met Elder Smith ok, left my large grip at the station, and walked out to Mr. Tom Drew's house where we had to await the arrival of Elder L.S. Money before we continued our journey. A prophecy muttered by Elder J.Z. Brown at New Zion, Bradford Co., Florida, July 7, 1898 stated that I would someday be a leading man in the Church. END

*The following record was in Elder Isom's journal, recording in his own handwriting.*

**CHILDREN BLESSED** Information is Child's Name, followed by the child's father's name, the child's mother's name, When Born, Where Born, When Blessed, By Whom: SAME APPLIES FOR BAPTISMS.

[Page 164-165 of diary]

### BLESSINGS

**Luatha Walker**, child of John Walker and Louisa Bird, born Feb 27, 1891 in Bradford Co., Fla., Blessed August 8, 1897, By Samuel Isom. Other Walker children, all born in Bradford Co., Fla. and blessed the same date as Luatha were: **Sallie** born Oct. 11, 1893, Blessed by Samuel Isom. **Sillas Isom Walker** born Oct. 30, 1882, blessed by L.W. Lund, **Sidney John Walker**, born Sept. 18, 1887 blessed by L.W. Lund.

**Isaac J. Tucker**, child of Isaac J. Tucker and Heneretta French Manning, born June 26, 1883 in Columbia County, Fla., blessed October 26, 1896 By Samuel Isom. Other Tucker children of Isaac J. Tucker and Heneretta Manning who were blessed on same day by Samuel Isom are: **Andrew M. Tucker**, born Apr 10, 1885, **Jane E.**, born July 21, 1887, **Rosa V.**, born July 30, 1889, **Alva C.**, born Sept. 14, 1892 and **Carrie Della**, born Oct 26, 1895.

**Frank C Barrington**, child of Americas Barrington and Sarah E. Bishop, born Sept 1894 in Jefferson Co., Fl. Blessed May 7, 1897 by Samuel Isom.

Two other children of same parents, **Grace A Barrington** born Nov 15, 1887 and **Calvin C Barrington** born July 24, 1882 born and blessed by same as above. **Winnifred A Barrington** born Jan 19, 1885 in Suwannee Co., Fla. blessed by W.C. Fiser and **Annie M. Barrington** born Dec. 16, 1891 in Madison Co., Fla. blessed by W.G. Fiser. All children have same blessing date.



Savanah Smith, child of Mr. Smith and Lenora Wilson, born Dec. 27, 1896 in Col. Co., Fla. blessed Jan 17, 1897 by Samuel Isom

Caira Raulerson, child of Nichabaud Raulerson and Martha J. Nettles, born Dec. 19, 1888 in Col. Co., Fla and blessed Sept 10, 1897 by W.C. Fiser. Other children of same parents all born and blessed the same day were: Almer Raulerson, born Sept 20, 1892, blessed by Samuel Isom, Coreen Raulerson, born Nov. 12, 1894 blessed by Samuel Isom Earnest Raulerson born Jan 27, 1892, blessed by W.G. Fiser, Mattie Raulerson, born Jan 26, 1897, blessed by W.C. Fiser.

Florence May Keen, child of McCluski Keen and Gussie Green ,born Aug 30, 1895 in Columbia County, Fla. Blessed Feb 23, 1897 by Samuel Isom.

Nettie May Hodges, child of Lemuel E. Hodges and Georgia Keen, born May 5, 1896, in Col. Co., Fla., blessed Feb. 23, 1897 by Samuel Isom

Read Dix ,child of Thos. Dix and Lulu, born Aug. 19, 1891 in Col. Co., Fla, blessed June 12, 1897 by Samuel Isom.

[Page 188-190]

Alonzo E. Kirkland , child of George Kirkland and his wife Nettie Hurst, born Oct 29, 1897 in Columbia Co., Fla., blessed Dec. 18, 1897 in Col. Co., Fla. by Samuel Isom,

William O. Durrance, child of Wm Durrance and Lenora Dowling, born Nov 12, 1887 in Columbia County, Fla., blessed Dec, 27, 1897 in Columbia Co., Fla by Samuel Isom.. Other children born to same parents, in Columbia Co., and blessed the same day, in Col. Co., were:

Jessie D. Durrance , born August 12, 1892, blessed by W.F. Tanner

Edwin H. Durrance, born Feb. 10, 1895 blessed by W.F. Tanner

Lenora M. Durrance, born Apr. 19, 1897, blessed by Samuel Isom

Willis S. Durden, child of James Durden and Mary Mock, born Oct 14, 1897 in Alachua Co., blessed Apr. 7, 1898 in Bradford Co., Fla., by Samuel Isom.

*[No page number listed and baptized and confirmed by page missing]*

## BAPTISMS

Louisia Molton, child of Irvin Kirkland and Synthia Colman, born Sept 27, 1857 in Emanuel Co., Ga. Baptized Apr 18, 1897 in Col. Co., Fla.

George G. Keen, child of William H. Keen and Lydia Gillett, born Mar 4, \*1827 in Applon Co., Ga. Baptized Apr 24, 1897 in Col., Co., Fla.\*FCR date 1858

Nicabaud Raulerson child of Nichabaud Raulerson and Matilda Brahan, born Sept. 25, 1870 in Col. Co., Fla, baptized Apr. 24, 1897 in Col. Co., Fla.

Katharine Waldron, child of Elias D. Waldron and Lovenia Wood, born July 8, 1875, baptized Apr 22, 1897, Col. Co., Fla.

Idella Wiggins, child of Elias D. Waldron and Lovenia Wood, b. May 1877, Col.Co.,Fl. bap. April 22, 1897.

Maggie E. Walker, child of John Walker and Louisa Bird, born Nov. 11, 1878 in Bradford Co., Fla. Baptized Aug 8, 1897.

Sarah Rimer, child of Chas. Wheeler and Jane Taylor born 1825 in Applon Co., Ga. Baptized Sept 7, 1897, Col. Col, Fla.

Rebecca J. Register, child of Daniel Avery and Birtha Cook, born Mar 9, 1841 in Wilkenson Co., Ga., baptized Sept 7, 1897

Sallie Register, child of Gilford Register and Rebecca J. Avery, born Jan 29, 1881 in Col. Co., Fla, baptized Sept 7, 1987 in Col Co. Fla.

Martha J. Raulerson, child of John J. Nettles and Jane Miller, born Apr 29, 1869 in Baker Co., Fla, baptized Sept 9, 1897 in \*Lake City, Col. Co., Fla.\*FCR

William Brazell, child of Daniel Brazell and Naoma Clanton, born 1834 in Camdon Co., Ga. baptized Dec 11, 1897 in Camdon Co., Ga.

William Durrance, child of Richard Lang and Eliza Jane Durrance, born Jan 12, \*1854 in Charlton Co., Ga. baptized Dec 26, 1897 in Col., Co., Fla.\*FCR 1834

Lenora Durrance, child of John M. Dowling and Mary Ann. Avery, born Jan 24, 1862 in Clinch Co., Ga. baptized Dec 26, 1897, Col. Co., Fla.

*[The following five names were very difficult to read. Spelling is questionable.]*

Joseph (?) Brydson, child of John Brydson and Katherine Morrow, born Jan 12, 1852 in Scotland, Baptized July 3, 1898 in Putnam Co., Fla.

Bambridge Pearce, child of John D. Pearce and Eliza Pearce, born Apr 24, 1868 in Columbia Co., Fla., baptized July 7, 1898 in Columbia County

Mary Cracker, child of Samuel Hanson and Mary Hanson, born Jan 31, 1856 in Schley (?) Co., Ga., baptized July 7, 1898 in Col. Co., Fla.

Caroline Pearce, child of Peter Williams and Eliza Williams, born Jan 10, 1857 in Bradford Co., Fla., baptized July 7, 1898 in Col. Co., Fla.

Fannie Pearce, child of Allen Smith and Sarah B. Smith, born May 4, 1875 in Bradford Co., Fla., baptized July 7, 1898 in Col. Co., Fla.

*[Due to poor copy about 25 additional baptisms had to be omitted from this record.]*

## BAPTISMS All in Columbia County Florida

*[Page 160-161 Note: Many spellings are incorrect but*

*copied as Isom's Journal recorded.]*

**James B. Wright**, child of F. Turner and Isabell C.

Wright, born Apr 1, 1857 in Levy Co., Fla. baptized Apr 10, 1896 by Samuel Isom, Confirmed by Jos A. West.

**Askina Keen**, child of William Lane and Plemaria

Gigger, born May 19 (no yr. given) in Applon Co., Ga.

Baptized June 14, 1896 by Samuel Isom. Confirmed by L.W. Robbins

**Sarah Wright**, child of Wade H. Reding and Mary A.

Wilson, born Jan 18, 1868, Suwannee Co., Ga.

Baptized July 26, 1896 by Samuel Isom Confirmed July 26, 1896

**Henrietta Tucker**, child of Geo P. Manning and Jaw (?)

E. Parott, born Dec 20, 1855 in Ware Co., Ga, Baptized

Aug 26, 1896 by Samuel Isom. Conf. by L.W. Robbins

**Joe H. Wright**, child of Frank Rollison and Isabell C.

Wright, born Feb 17, 1855, in Leavy Co., Fla. Baptized

Oct. 4, 1876 by Samuel Isom. Confirmed by L.W.

Robbins Oct 4, 1896

**Sarah Milton**, child of Millage Branhan and Eliza Biwell,

born 1835 Columbia Co., Fla. Baptized Nov. 24, 1896

by Samuel Isom. Confirmed Nov. 24, 1896 by E.J.

Butterfield

**Charles F. Melton**, child of Robert Melton and Sarah A.

Melton, born Nov. 10, 1868 Col. Co. Fl. Baptized Nov

24, 1896 by Samuel Isom. Confirmed Dec 19, 1896 by

E.J. Butterfield.

**Noah E. Fry**, child of Philip Fry and Polly Besenger,

born Jan 3, 1833 in N.C. Baptized Dec 10, 1896 by

Samuel Isom. Confirmed Dec 10, 1896 by E.J.

Butterfield

**Asabell Wright**, child of J.L. Wright and Mary Parnell,

born Jan 7, 1886 Col. Co., Fla. Baptized Oct 7, 1896 by

C.J. Butterfield, Confirmed Oct 7, 1896 by Samuel Isom

**Isabee C. Mixon**, child of Leavy Wright and Abigall

Curry, born Dec 6, 1833 Tatnell Ga. baptized Sept 6,

1896 by E..J. Butterfield, confirmed Oct 7, 1896 by

Samuel Isom

**Minnie Milton**, child of Malachi Waldron and Martha

A. Dunaway, born Apr 7, 1870 in Clinch Co., Ga. bap-

tized Dec 19, 1896 by L.W. Robbins Confirmed Sept 6,

1896 by Samuel Isom.

**J.L. Wright**, child of Mathew Walker and Isabell C.

Wright, born Oct 17, 1866 in Col. Co., Fla. Baptized

Sept 6, 1896 Confirmed by Samuel Isom Dec 19, 1896.

**Edwin Rogerson**, child of Jas. Rogerson and Penny, born

Jan 2, 1830 N.C. Baptized Mar 9, 1897

**Geo A. Hodge**, child of Lennrd Hodge and Georgia

Keen, born Aug 30, 1886 Col. Co., Fla. Baptized Feby

23, 1897 by F. Cutler Confirmed Mar 9, 1896 by

Samuel Isom.

**Rebecca Waldron**, child of William Lane and Phomariah

Giger, born Jan 9, 1845 Ware Co., Ga. Baptized Feby

23, 1897 by Samuel Isom. Confirmed by Samuel Isom

Feby. 23, 1896.

**Bertie Hodge**, child of Lemuel Hodge and Georgia

Keen, born July 9, 1884 Madison, Fl. Baptized Feb. 23,

1897 by Samuel Isom. Confirmed Feby 23, 1897 by F.

Cutler

**Edwin Rogerson**, child of Jas. Rogerson and Penny—,

born Jan 2, 1830, N.C. Bap. Mar 9, 1897.

**Georgia Hodge**, child of David Kern and Nettie Lane,

born Sept 13, 1861 by Samuel Isom and Confirmed by

F. Cutler Feby 23, 1897.

**Geo C. Kirkland**, child of Irvin Kirkland and Synthia

Coleman, born Oct 29, 1861, in Emanuel, Ga.

Baptized April 18, 1897 by Samuel Isom. Confirmed

Apr. 18, 1897 by F. Cutler

**Nettie Kirkland**, child of Daniel Hurst and Jane

Durence, born Jan 31, 1873 in Eccles, Ga. Baptized Apr

18, 1897 by Samuel Isom. Confirmed Apr 18, 1897 by

F. Cutler.

**Allice Melton**, child of Irvin Kirkland and Synthia

Coleman, born Mar 3, 1855 in Emanuel, Ga. Baptized

Apr. 18, 1897 by Samuel Isom. Confirmed Apr 18, 1897

by F. Cutler

**Edith Register**, child of Gilford Register and Rebecca

Avery. Born Aug 7, 1874 in Clinch. Baptized Apr 18,

1897 by Samuel Isom. Confirmed Apr 18, 1897 by

Samuel Isom.

**Lizzie Hines**, child of Hue Melton and Alice Kirkland,

born Feb 6, 1876 Co. in Col. Co., Fla. Baptized April

18, 1897 by Samuel Isom. Confirmed Apr 18, 1897 by

Samuel Isom.

## BLESSINGS

[Page 162 163]

**Bessie Dix**, child of Thomas Dix and Lulu, born Dec 4, 1888 in Col. Co., Fl. Blessed June 12, 1897 by (no listing)

**Charley Melton**, child of Charles Melton and Miram

Hagen, born July 20, 1885 in Col. Co. Fla., Blessed Mar

17, 1897 by Samuel Isom.

**Harley Melton**, parents same as above, born August 8,

1887 in Hamilton Co., Fl. Blessed March 17, 1897 by

Samuel Isom

**Horris Melton**, parents same as above, born Apr 7,

1889, Col. Co., Fla, blessed March 17, 1897 by Samuel

Isom.

*[Next four Melton children share same parents, birthplace and blessing date by Samuel Isom]*

**Carrie** born Oct 17, 1890, **Neal**, born May 10, 1892,

**Hugh** born Mar 8, 1894, **Jessie Melton**, born Apr 19,

1896.

**Gussie Lovenia**, child of Wm Adams and Katharine

Waldron, born Oct 3, 1896 blessed March 17 1897 by

Samuel Isom



Hugh Butler, child of Wm Y. Butler and Sudie E. Thompson, born Jan 19, 1892 in Jefferson Co., Fla, blessed Nov 16, 1897 by Frank Cutler

Other Butler children:

Mabel Butler, same parents, born July 3, 1894, same county and blessing date by Samuel Isom

John E. Butler, born Jan 11, 1897 blessed by Frank Cutler

*[Following Merriman children all have same blessing date of Nov. 16, 1897]*

Leola A. Merriman, child of Geo. E. Merriman and Dorothy P. Hassel, born Aug 15, 1886 Madison Co., Fla. blessed by Samuel Isom

Media (?) Merriman, born Aug 1887 by Frank Cutler  
Rosie B. born Nov. 8, 1888 in Jefferson Co., Fla. blessed by Samuel Isom

Geo. H. Merriman, born Apr 8, 1889, Jefferson Co., Fla. blessed by Frank Cutler

Carrie U. Merriman, born Apr 10, 1890 in Jefferson Co., blessed by Samuel Isom

*[Following Hassell children have same parents, Jos. A Hassell and Jennie A. Merman, birth place and blessing date]*

Bessie I Hassell, born Sept 11, 1886 blessed by Frank Cutler

Ida Bell, born Nov 21, 1897, blessed by Samuel Isom

Joel F. Hassel, born Jan 22, 1889, blessed by Frank Cutler

Geo H, born Nov 18, 1890, blessed by Sam'l Isom

Willie, born Mar 3, 1894, blessed by Frank Cutler

Victoria F. Peebles, child of William C Peebles and Laura G. Brown, born Dec 5, 1884, in Camden Co., Ga. blessed Dec 1, 1897 by Samuel Isom

Samuel C. Peebles, born Dec 12, 1896 in Camden Co., Ga. blessed Dec 1, 1897.

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## HALLOWED JOURNEYS

*Hallowed journeys have always been  
For the Pilgrim feet of stout hearted men  
Who tend to seek for higher ground  
On which to stand with a firmer sound  
"Oh, Lord," they say as they journey there  
"I've come this far through Thee in prayer  
Lead me on or let me stay  
As long as Thou will lead my way!"*

*La Viece M. Smallwood*

## JOURNEY'S END

*When I've come to my journey's end  
I pray I've been the way of men  
Who blazed the way that I have trod  
While holding fast the iron rod.  
I hope I've learned the things most meant  
By the Redeeming Savior that God sent  
I hope He'll say at my journey's end  
"You've followed true the path of men  
Whose courageous journeys honored my name  
And brought to them eternal fame.  
Men who crossed the perilous sea  
Pilgrims who settled a colony  
Constitution, Bill of Rights and  
Bunker Hill....a valiant fight!  
All this and more has come to be  
Because these men have honored me."  
As I have journeyed into the past  
To see the things men made to last  
I pray someday my life will be  
A journey into eternity.*

*Where I'll pass through the Halls of Fame  
That honors all the valiant names  
When I come to my journey's end  
I hope to embrace these noble men.*

*La Viece Moore Smallwood*



**Missionary Conference, Short and Claude Street Church circa 1918.**

Seated at center is Charles A. Callis. Behind him is Nellie Hill. Seated to his right is Elder Whitaker, Conference President, with his wife and children.  
ID by Lawrence Maddock, Pensacola, Florida.





**Lackawanna Branch Sunday School Mission Home next to Chapel at Claude and Short Street circa 1923**

*Numbering continually from left to right:*

Front row beginning with small child #10 Alvie and June Stacy, #15 Grindstaff, #17 Webb. Second row #25, 26 Teddy Bluemell, #44 Marguerite Hill, #46 Mallie Croft, #48 Pearl Stacy, #54 Edna Kirkland, #57 and #58, Cleo and Frank Anderson, #61 Pearl Hodges, #69 Alberta Chester, #73 Janie Wigg, #74 Vella Tucker Stacy, #75 Ruth Hill, #76 Bro. Melrose, #79 Bro. Grindstaff and #81 Edna Grindstaff, #95 Sister Croft.



Jacksonville, Florida, August 1905

Mr. James R. Terrell

Dear Brother,

In the latter part of 1904, and the beginning of 1905, we sent out letters asking the Saints to aid us in purchasing land and building a church. With your noble response, and the aid of President Rich and the Elders, we have purchased a nice lot. Our aim now is to build a church but we need more money. The Elders will do the carpenter work, so the work of construction will cost us nothing.

God has promised to bless us abundantly if we will give freely to His cause.

The Elders willingly spend their time and hundreds of dollars to spread the Gospel among those who sit in spiritual darkness. You are called to aid us in this work and your assistance will indeed be a noble mission.

When completed the church will be a nice place for holding semi-annual conferences. Many people will attend our regular meeting then, who will not come to a private dwelling.

I trust, Brethren and Sisters, that you will give this your prayerful consideration and liberally aid us.

We are making arrangements to start work at once. God bless you, I am your brother.

Pres. C.E. Ferrin

P.S. Address all contributions to: Pres. C.E. Ferrin, P.O. Box 6, Jacksonville, Fla,



*First LDS Church constructed in Jacksonville at Claude and Short Street. Funded by the saints in 1904 and constructed by elders shown in photo: Elders Elmer B. Mecham, Wilford Whittaker, A. M. Palmer, A. G. Barton, G. A. Phipps and Brother Adams, the former in charge. Cost Approx. \$2,000.*

Article in Elder's Journal  
no date given

In the fall of 1904 the Elders and Saints of Jacksonville, Florida, having for a long time felt the lack of a suitable place in which to worship the Lord, decided to make an effort to obtain aid from the Saints in various parts of the Conference and erect a meeting-house. The matter was submitted to President Ben E. Rich, who sanctioned the movement. A committee was appointed to make all arrangements, and consisted of the following brethren and sisters: President Golightly, Elders A.L. McAlister, C.E. Ferrin, Brother Fred Reimer and sisters A.G. Watson and W.V. Colby. Letters signed by this committee were sent to the

Saints throughout the Conference asking them for financial help in the undertaking. Many nobly responded and with their support and that given by President Rich. Land was secured and the building erected. Excepting the mason work, the building has been constructed by Elders Elmer B. Mathew (?sp), Wilford Whittaker, A.M. Palmer, A.G. Burton, G.A. Phiapen (?sp), and Brother Adams, the former in charge. They pulled off their preacher's clothes, put on overalls and jumpers, and did every bit of the carpenter work, even to building the pulpit and painting the building inside and out. It was a sermon to the people of Jacksonville that many of them never tire of talking about, to see preachers of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ handle the saw and the hammer and build a church from the ground to the steeple — it was something that opened their eyes.

The building completed cost a little over \$2,000. It is insured for \$1,000. The Elders who did the carpenter work are seen in the picture.

**Relief Society Presidency,  
Jacksonville Branch,  
Jacksonville, Florida, 1910**

*In front of church at Claude and Short Streets.  
Standing: Florence Terrell Harvin, President  
Left: Margaret Greene Hill, 1st Counselor  
Right: Ela Hill Roberts, 2nd Counselor*







**Claude and Short Street Church:  
Jacksonville Relief Society circa 1912**

*Left to right: An unidentified visitor, Sister Curtis, Mabel Roberts Rast, Adaline Chase, her son Henry, Ella Hill Roberts, Sister Riles, Lady missionary, Sister Merriman (she is Sister Shaw's grandmother), Mary Whitaker with two children, Lady missionary, Sister Lake, U.K., Mary Hill (George's Wife), U. K., Mary Terrell, U.K. Sister Nora Copeland, Sister Ethel Gray, Sister Rushing, Ida Hill Stevenson, Georgia Cordell. Seated: Florence Harvin, Mary Canova, Margaret Greene Hill, Edna Hill Grindstaff, Clifton (her son).*

**Elders' Journal Jan 1, 1906 p. 150** On the evening of November 21 the Elders had a social at Jacksonville at the home of Mrs. Sellers, preparatory to departing from Conference to their work in their counties. The evening was spent in music. On November 26 a baptism was held at the St. Johns River, but at too late an hour to hold a public meeting. President Ferrin officiated. Abel Roberts and Foster Hill were baptized. On November

28 another baptism was performed in the St. Johns River, Pres. Ferrin officiating, when Ellis Whittamore was added to the church.

**Elders' Journal Oct 1, 1906:** A general conference of the Elders and Saints was held at Jacksonville on September 1 and 2, President Ben E. Rich being present. The new church building, which was dedicated to the Lord at this conference, was filled to overflowing at all sessions. Brother Rich said it was the best gathering he had attended in Florida. The dedicatory service took place Sunday

afternoon of the 2nd, President Rich officiating in prayer. The building was filled with the hallowed influence of the Holy Spirit, the same possessing the hearts of those present. During the month some of the Elders could not secure entertainment and remained out during the night. Two of the brethren got lost in their travels and spent the night in a school house. Ten baptisms were performed during the month.

**Jacksonville LDS Sunday School  
August 22, 1914**

**Claude and Short Streets**

*(Several people contributed the identifications in this photo)*

*First Row Standing, Right to Left: Man U.K., Woman with ornament around neck is Nellie Hill, lady to her right with dark skirt and white blouse is Josephine (Mrs. A. O.) Jenkins. Short lady to her right is Georgia Cordell. Man directly behind Sis. Cordell is T.C. Copeland. Man holding baby to left of photo is Clifton Grindstaff. Martha Rudd is second woman on left of photo standing. Top row to left is Nancy Sellers. Tall man in doorway Isaac Josiah Tucker. Tall woman in front of first window from left is Ruth Jones Hill. Children in front row are Nellie Hill's Sunday School Class. First Child is (?) Kidd, second Aline Roberts, third U.K., fourth child is Margaret Hill.*







**Missionary Conference, Short and Claude Street Church circa 1918.**

*ID by Lawrence Maddock, Pensacola, Florida.*

*Seated at center is Charles A. Callis. Behind him is Nellie Hill. Seated to his right is Elder Whitaker, Conference President, with his wife and children.*

## DUVAL COUNTY

**Source: Liahona: The Elders' Journal May 20, 1908**

FLORIDA: O.W. Hyde, President, 1324 Claude Street, Jacksonville, Fla.: President Charles A. Callis was in Jacksonville, Sunday Feb 21st. He spoke to the children in the Sunday School in an interesting manner; and was the principal speaker at the morning and evening services, which were largely attended. His discourses were of a doctrinal character, building the people up in their

faith, and favorable impressing many non-members who came out to hear him preach. A priesthood meeting was held Sunday afternoon at which a number of the Elders, and the local priesthood of the Jacksonville Branch were present. Pres. Callis announced that Elder O.W. Hyde with his family would soon be transferred to Atlanta where Pres. Hyde would preside over the Atlanta conference. Elder I.W. Blazzard, who in point of service, is the oldest Elder in

the mission, having been here over twenty-nine months, was appointed to succeed Elder Hyde as president of the Florida conference. Elders Geo. P. Riggs and Jos. H. Jones were recently called to administer to Mrs. M.E. Frooge who had been a confirmed invalid for 20 years. Through the blessings of the Lord, she experienced a great improvement in her health. On Sunday, Feb 14th Mr. W.N. Baker, with his wife and two daughters were baptized in the Atlantic ocean by Elders Reed Gardner and Lorin Taylor. Three hundred people witnessed the ceremony.



**Lackawanna Branch Sunday School Mission Home next to Chapel at Claude and Short Street circa 1923**

*Numbering continually from left to right:*

*Front row beginning with small child #10 Alvie and June Stacy, #15 Grindstaff, #17 Webb. Second row #25, 26 Teddy Bluemell, #44 Marguerite Hill, #46 Mallie Croft, #48 Pearl Stacy, #54 Edna Kirkland, #57 and #58, Cleo and Frank Anderson, #61 Pearl Hodges, #69 Alberta Chester, #73 Janie Wigg, #74 Vella Tucker Stacy, #75 Ruth Hill, #76 Bro. Melrose, #79 Bro. Grindstaff and #81 Edna Grindstaff, #95 Sister Croft.*



*HISTORICAL EXCERPTS  
OF LDS CHURCH  
IN VARIOUS FLORIDA COUNTIES*

*including:*

*Alachua*

*Baker*

*Columbia*

*Dade*

*Dixie*

*Duval*

*Hillsboro*

*Madison*

*Suwannee*

*and Union*

*as well as*

*Sanderson Oak Grove  
and Gainesville sections  
with missionary report*

## ALACHUA COUNTY / GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

*When the first LDS missionaries entered Florida, they walked, rain or sunshine, through the mosquito infested woods of north Florida seeking to tell the story of the Restored Gospel. Sometimes they slept in rat infested barns, deserted tenant shacks, and sometimes in the outdoors beneath the stars. If they were lucky, especially in the beginning, they were often invited to stay in the farm homes of the rural citizenry of Florida where they more often than not wrestled and were plagued with the ever present problem of nipping bedbugs, wood ticks, and gnats. A few missionary journals have been preserved to help paint the scene as it actually occurred in the time and era they came to serve. In the larger cities, such as Gainesville, the Elders found better accommodations as related here.*

*According to David M. Mayfield, Assistant Church Librarian Archivist, an Elder Benj. W. Scott was asked by the First Presidency to surrender his letter of appointment, 'as he was preaching Methodism from his brother's pulpit.' Elder Scott was assigned to the state of Florida in June 1894 and the letter from the First Presidency was sent to President Elias Kimball, president of the Southern States Mission on February 1, 1895.*

*In the latter part of the 1800s they ventured into Alachua County. The first to enter were Elders Louis W. Lund and his companion, but they left no record that has been found of their labors.*

*In 1895–98 Elder Samuel Isom of Mountain Dell, Utah, labored in the Southern States Mission. At his death, his journal was divided among his descendants and tragically the 1895–96 portion cannot be located. Fortunately, the 1896–97 portion is reprinted in this book, and the June 22–July 14 trip he made to Gainesville and the surrounding area with his companion, Lorenzo W. Robbins of Oakley, Idaho, is added to this section. His spelling and expressions remain as written in his journal.*

On Monday, June 21, 1897, Elders Samuel Isom of Mountain Dell, Utah, and Lorenzo W. Robbins of Oakley, Idaho, packed their grips in the home of Brother Sutton in Bradford County, Florida, and started for Gainesville. The following excerpts are from Elder Isom's journal on his experiences in Gainesville. "We passed through Waldo at noon. We continued on and at sundown we arrived at the home of Mr. R.A. Scruggs, tired and hungry. The gentleman entertained us nicely. On the way down we were taken for the James Brothers. We spent the evening singing and playing the organ. We

had a heavy thundershower."

Tuesday, June 22, 1897. We shined our shoes, brushed our clothes, and went up town to the Mayor's Office. We couldn't get to speak with him for a little while as he had business in the court room, so we entered the building where he and the city marshall were trying some Darkies. After court adjourned, we interviewed the Mayor in regard to canvassing and preaching on the streets. He said he had no objections. Then we visited both papers, and the editors said they would furnish us their papers free. We furnished all the leading men with cards, tracts, and a Voice of Warning. Then we visited the Arlington Hotel, where we entered into the conversation with several prominent men, which lasted about two hours. When the argument closed, with Mormons victorious as usual, Mr. Seagle invited us into the dining room where we feasted on the fat of the land. While doing so, a bright little Darkey stood by with a large palmetto fan to keep down the perspiration while we ate. It was Fast Day and of course we ate hearty. After dinner was over, Mr. Seagle invited us back again. We thanked him very kindly, and made him a present of V. of W. and went up town. We did a little canvassing and came back on Main Street and visited the City Hotel. We told the proprietress our mode of traveling and she invited us to spend the night at the hotel. We accepted the invitation, and ate a hearty supper. We wrote a letter to President Cutler and went to bed. I would here state that before entering the city, we went into the woods and dedicated the city, the people, and ourselves into the hands of the Lord, asking Him to soften the hearts of the people that they may understand and obey the message we were bearing. Also, to cause the proprietors of hotels to open their doors to us. Our prayers were answered in this respect on entering the city with the exception of one place. That was Spence Hotel. The gentleman there told us he could do nothing for us.

Wednesday, June 23, 1897. After going to the P.O., we commenced canvassing in the Eastern part of the city, with moderate success. We continued our canvass until nearly dark when we arrived at the home of Mr. John Burton. We had a long Gospel talk with them. They were Seventh-day Adventists. We were entertained very nicely, and when we left, we were invited to return again.

Thursday, June 24, 1897. After canvassing all day in the hot sun with varying success, we returned to the home of James J. Burton.

Friday, June 25, 1897. We canvassed all day in the business part of the city. We visited some of the most ele-



gant homes that I had ever seen. We had several rejected testimonies and at about six o'clock we visited the Magnolia Hotel. We had a talk with the proprietor. He and his wife were both sick, but told us to call when they were well, and they would do what they could to help us along. We gave them a V. of W and then went down to the Arlington Hotel and told the Proprietor, Mr. Seagle, that we had come to stay all night with him. He said to make ourselves at home. We had a lovely supper and did justice to it, for we had had no dinner. After supper we lounged around in the sitting room until 9 o'clock. Then we went to our room which was No. 20 and stretched ourselves out for the night.

Saturday, June 26, 1897. We had a chat with several gentlemen in the hotel. Then we commenced canvassing in the northern part of the city. The people in this part of the city were mostly bankers and merchants. We had dinner with a lady by the name of Cromwell. We had a long talk with an infidel by the name of Bracy. We went to Arlington Hotel. We got into an argument with the proprietor and an ex-editor by the name of McCreasy. He is the proprietor of the Sun, the leading newspaper. From there we went to the home of Mr. James J. Burton and held a meeting in his house and remained there all night.

Sunday, June 27, 1897. Because it was Sunday we remained at the house of Mr. Burton all day. In the evening the neighborhood came in and we held a meeting. I occupied the time on the Principle of Repentance.

Monday, June 28, 1897. We visited the office several times expecting our literature to come so we could go on with the canvass. After waiting until after sun down, and not getting it, we went to the home of Mr. Newburn in the northern end of the city. He and his wife were Catholics. We spent a very pleasant evening talking on the Gospel. We remained there all night.

Tuesday, June 29, 1897. Mr. Newburn got up early in the morning and went to his work. He was a Section Foreman. At about 7 o'clock we got up and had breakfast, then went down to the office, but still no tracts, so we walked up town to visit some gentlemen that owned the Armory Hall. They proved to be Jews by the name of Eudel. Of course, they did not believe in Christ, so we had a long talk on the Gospel. Mr. Eudel told us we could use the Armory Hall, but it would be so hot that people could not endure it. So we bid him goodnight after giving him a V. of W and a tract and went to the home of Mr. Burton and held a meeting and remained there all night.

Wednesday, June 30, 1897. We remained at Burton's all day reading and talking on the Gospel. Nothing of interest happened. We stayed there all day, also at night.

Thursday, July 1, 1897. At 11 o'clock our tracts came in and we commenced canvassing in dead earnest. Nothing exciting occurred that day with the exception of a couple of freight trains running together causing them to be thrown from the tracks with considerable damage to both. We continued canvassing all day and stayed at Brother Burton's at night.

Friday, July 2, 1897. We continued our canvass until noon when we went to the home of W.O. Tison, by invitation, a beautiful home on one of the main streets. After dinner we went upon the Court House Block to hold a meeting, but the rain began to fall, which compelled us to postpone our meeting until the next morning. Then we went to Mr. Burton's for the night. I will state here that on the evening of the first, we held our first meeting in Gainesville at about 5 o'clock in the evening on the corner of Court House Block. We had a nice crowd. Elder Robbins spoke on the definition of the word faith, and I spoke on the character of God.

Saturday, July 3, 1897. At about 10 o'clock a.m. we took our stand on one of the corners in the center of the city. The people gathered around us and we preached two sermons. I spoke on Repentance and Elder Robbins spoke on Baptism. After dismissing, we went to Brother Burton's and had dinner. After which we went back on Main Street and took our stand on the northeast corner of the Public Square. We sang and opened with prayer and then Elder Robbins spoke on Repentance and I spoke on the Mode of Baptism. We had a large crowd. After resting about an hour, we moved to the west corner of the Court House Block and got a box to lay our books on. The people gathered around us and the street was crowded for nearly a block with people, black and white mixed. I spoke on the Holy Ghost and the manner in which we could receive it. Elder Robbins spoke on the Fruits of the Spirit. After dismissing, Mr. Burton came along and told us that he could hear us over to his home, which was about five blocks away. We went home with Brother Burton for the night. We spent the evening pleasantly talking on the Gospel with the family.

Sunday, July 4, 1897. We stayed at Brother Burton's all day. Elder Robbins went to the Presbyterian Church at night. I stayed at home and wrote several letters to the Saints.

**Monday, July 5, 1897.** We went into west Gainesville to do some canvassing. We got along nicely. We had plenty of melons and did considerable talking, but we got our hour set by a Baptist minister by the name of York. We had secured the North Gainesville Hall for the following Sunday. We tacked up a notice at the store and went back to Brother Burton's for the night. We witnessed a grand display of fireworks.

**Tuesday, July 6, 1897.** We completed the canvass of the city. While doing this we met a man by the name of Richerson, who refused to take a tract, but we talked to him and his wife until they accepted a tract and a V. of W. and ordered a Book of Mormon. Then we visited the cotton gins and the turpentine shop and made arrangements with the leader of the band for the Band Stand to preach in. Then we went to Burton's and had some dinner. We went down town to hold a meeting. We took our stand on the northeast corner of the Court House Block and commenced singing. Our singing collected a small crowd and we commenced preaching. After our meeting was dismissed there were several of the leading men of the city who came up to us and asked us to explain our Faith. So we read the Articles of Religion and explained them briefly. After the discussion closed they ordered three Books of Mormon. Then we turned our steps toward the home of Mr. Burton where we stayed all night.

**Wednesday, July 7, 1897.** After breakfast we went downtown and visited Mr. Lambrith, the Banker. We had a long talk with him. Several other gentlemen were present. We loaned a Book of Mormon to the Jeweler and then made several calls on friends. Then we sauntered down Main Street and held a meeting on one of the business blocks. Elder Robbins did all the speaking. I had a bad cold and a headache and did not feel like speaking. After dismissing we went back to Mr. Burton's for the night.

*No Thursday entry*

**Friday, July 9, 1897.** We remained at Burton's until after dinner. Then we went to the home of Mr. Full to talk with the lady on the Gospel. She had invited us several days before. After conversing with her for about two hours, we went back on Main Street and took our stand on the corner of one of the business blocks. We sang and prayed and commenced speaking. Elder Robbins spoke on Repentance and I spoke on Baptism. Then we went to Mr. Burton's where a nice little crowd gathered and we spoke to them for about an hour and a half on Organization and the Holy Ghost. The hearers seemed

delighted with the subjects and felt well—paid for coming out to hear us.

**Saturday, July 10, 1897.** We stayed at Mr. Burton's until after dinner. We had a bath in a tub in Burton's kitchen. Then we went on Main Street to hold a meeting, but a thunder shower come up and we were compelled to stay indoors until about 4 o'clock. Then we went out on the street and sang a few hymns and collected quite a crowd. Elder Robbins was to take up the time as I was not feeling well, but after speaking for about 35 minutes he got hoarse and had to stop. So I addressed the audience for a short time on Baptism. Then we dismissed our meeting and as usual offered our tracts to all who wished one. An old Darkie came up and laid a nickel on the box and said that was for us. We thanked the old fellow, then went back to Mr. J.J. Burton's. While we had been downtown, Brother Burton left the house for a few hours and a thief entered and stole his revolver. Mrs. Burton had gone to Waldo to attend the Seventh-Day Adventist Conference, and Mr. Burton had to go down town to see the Sheriff. So that left Elder Robbins and I to get supper. So we went to the cupboard and got out cake, bread, tomatoes, and syrup; we ate a hearty supper. Then we went back on the Main Street to hold our meeting at the Band Stand, which we had secured the use of for two nights for 50 cents. It is a beautiful place erected on the Court House Block on purpose for the band. It contains 8 gas lights, which when lit make a lovely sight. We sang a few selections, which congregated quite a large crowd. I addressed them for about 50 minutes on Church organization and Elder Robbins spoke on the Holy Ghost. The people seemed well pleased with our sermons. After turning off the gas lights, we made our way to Burton's to throw our tired bodies upon the bed to dream of home and sleep the sweet sleep that comes to a Mormon Elder.

**Sunday, July 11, 1897.** We remained at Brother Burton's nearly all day, it being Sunday and Fast Day also. We didn't have any appointments to fill, so we rested until afternoon. Then Mrs. Burton returned from Waldo where she had been attending a meeting. After chatting with her about her trip, we went to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Newburn, a Catholic family who seemed to be interested in the Gospel. We spent a very pleasant evening talking on the Establishment of the Kingdom of God. Then we went to bed but did not sleep much on account of the mosquitoes.

**Monday, July 12, 1897.** We went into North Gainesville to complete the canvass. We intended to hold some meetings in North Gainesville Hall by consent of one of



the Trustees, but a Mr. Means (whose name was appropriate) came home, and being one of the Trustees, objected. So we failed in our appointments. We finished the canvass. We took dinner with Mr. Bailey and in the evening walked back to Mr. Burton's.

Tuesday, July 13, 1897. We spent the day visiting newspapers, Bankers, Proprietors of Hotels, and distributing books that had been ordered previously to that time principally Books of Mormon. At night we held a meeting at the home of Mr. Burton where we had a crowd of attentive hearers. The people that attended seemed disappointed to think that we were going away on the morrow.

Wednesday, July 14, 1897. Elder Robbins went downtown to deliver a Book of Mormon and bid them goodbye, and I went uptown to the home of Mr. Newburn to deliver a Book of Mormon and bid them goodbye. I found Mrs. Newburn at home. I had a nice chat with her on the Gospel. She gave me a standing invitation to call on them whenever I came to Gainesville. After bidding her goodbye, I sent down to Mr. Burton's where our grips were, and began to pack them, preparatory to leaving the city. We made Sister Burton a present of a Book of Mormon, one of Orson Pratt's Books, one Voice of Warning, and one Hymn Book for her kindness during our stay in the City. After bidding the family adieu, we shouldered our grips and went out on the railroad. After walking about four miles, we came to the little stream of water, where we attended to the ordinance of foot washing at 10:30 a.m. Then we walked up to Farnbanks, purchased a ticket, which cost us 50 cents each, to Hampton, Bradford County. We changed cars at Waldo, waited about two hours, and then we went down to Hampton, arriving there at about 4 p.m. Then we went to the home of Mr. Joseph Sutton. We found Mr. Sutton pulling fodder. We had some fine melons and supper. Then we went to dream of home, loved ones, and our future labor.

*For more than a century there have been reports of the Mormon missionaries dusting their feet off when rejected in a certain area. Cedar Key is such a one, and it has been continually repeated and handed down for years, that this has been the reason the town of Cedar Key never grew to any proportions. As far as research has gone, no actual records have been found where missionaries 'dusted their feet off in Cedar Key'. Perhaps someday records will be revealed if it is indeed truth instead of lore. However, there are records of 'the washing of feet as a testimony against those who rejected the gospel.*

*The names of Elders, location of place and stream/or branch of water where the ordinance took place is listed in another section of this book. It should be noted that a feet washing took place outside of Gainesville, July 14, 1897, with Elders Isom and Robbins performing the ordinance.*

*The following information has been taken from Church records and the historical work of Roger M. Thompson, Associate Professor and English and Linguistics, of Gainesville, Florida. He is the Bishop, Gainesville First Ward.*

The first convert known baptisms in Alachua County were in April of 1899 when Leonard J. Guynn, an ordained Church of Christ minister, and his wife Louisa were baptized northwest of Newberry after investigating the Church for one year. The missionaries continued to hold meetings in the Guynn home and soon neighbor families were baptized.

For a period of time, beginning in the late 1920s, the missionaries held a family Sunday school and other meetings in the Acie Crocker home in Newberry on a regular basis. Soon these meetings alternated between the Crocker and Jesse P. Watson home south of High Springs. Jesse's wife, Julia, was the daughter of Leonard Guynn, the first-known convert in the county. There were usually about 17 people present counting the two families and missionaries.

Gradually, Mr. Thompson wrote, Mormons began to move in from counties to the north. In 1909 the Thomas J. Crocker family arrived in Newberry from Bradford County. In 1932 Ana Lee Crownover and Rosa Lee Lampros and their families arrived in Gainesville from Madison County. Many years passed before these families knew of each other. Contact with the Church for these families was found when the traveling missionaries came through and with the help of a list of members they brought with them from Church headquarters, would stay for a few days. They would help around the farms, entertain the children and in the evening, hold 'cottage meetings,' or preaching services in the home for the family and neighborhood friends. Then they would perform any necessary baptisms and move on.

The first Latter-day Saint Sunday school other than these family meetings was held in Gainesville in 1935 when two missionaries, Elders Smith and Huber Brown, noticed that the LDS children were attending other churches. A hall on the third floor over the Presto Restaurant on West University Avenue was rented (now the N.E. corner of West University Ave. and 1st St.) The missionaries and eight persons, Annie Lee Crownover,

her daughter Juanita, Rosa Lee Lampros, her children Jack and Betty Rose, Ludie Armstead, Myrtis Roland and Mixon Roland attended. Later Jack Lampros, Mixon Roland and Myrtis Roland were baptized.

Missionary work almost ceased to exist in Gainesville for lack of interest of the citizens. Annie Crownover received permission from the mission headquarters in Atlanta to hold a home Sunday school. For the next five years it alternated between her home and the Lampros home. Just about the time this home Sunday school was going to be discontinued for lack of interest, the missionaries were sent again to Gainesville. A meeting at that time was held with Saints throughout the county invited and a county-wide Sunday school was organized with the missionaries in charge. LDS meetings have been held continuously in Gainesville since then. It continued in various homes, then the missionaries rented the Boy Scout cabin, purchased a piano, and soon evening services were added with missionary work becoming more successful. Several people, who later played an important role in the growth of the Church in Gainesville, joined, such as Homer Bradberry, who later became branch president, and his wife Alma, who was the first organist. Chester Tillman was the first missionary to be sent out from Gainesville, and later became bishop of the Gainesville Ward and a member of the stake presidency. Olin Shuler, a student at the university, became the first Sunday School superintendent, and a Lt. Roberts stationed at Camp Blanding became the first non-missionary Sunday school teacher. Ana Crownover became the first Relief Society president. Primary was organized under the direction of Jessie Perkins.

Less than a year after moving into the Boy Scout hut, there were enough active members in Gainesville to create a branch with local rather than missionary leadership. President James R. Boone of the Florida District of the Southern States Mission came from Jacksonville and organized the Gainesville Branch of the Church. Robert H. Sylvester who had served the year before as a missionary in Gainesville but was now a student at the University of Florida, became the first branch president. With the help of Homer Bradberry, President Sylvester secured the little block building at 801 S. Virginia Ave. The first branch Sunday School superintendent was 16 year-old Jack Lampros. For the first time the Sunday school was divided into classes according to age groups and two-and-one-half-minute talks were instituted as outlined by the Church.

Growth slowed during World War II. In 1945 there were 32 members with 12 to 15 members attending. After the war the branch grew again as the university attracted professors and students from the West.

When the Florida Stake was created January 19,

1947, Gainesville was organized as a branch of the Florida Stake with Don Willis as branch president. Later Murray Shields was released from the high council to become branch president and he presided over the Church in Gainesville until 1967, when he retired from the University and moved to Arizona. Under his leadership the small branch grew to a large ward. Gainesville always provided people for stake leadership positions. At all times, from one to six members of the high council were from Gainesville.

In 1951 the branch sought larger quarters and remained in the Odd Fellows hall for the next 12 years growing very slowly. In 1955 there were only 79 members, 30 average attendance at Sunday school and 20 in the evening meetings. In 1959 the youth were organized into a MIA association, a Boy Scout troop was chartered with William Brown as the scoutmaster, and the branch began to sponsor an annual 'Gold and Green Ball'.

Between 1955 and 1960 membership nearly doubled to 136. In 1951 land had been purchased for an LDS chapel on SW 5th Avenue, just off the university campus. In 1961 an agreement was made with the authorities in Salt Lake City to construct a combination LDS chapel and Institute of Religion on the branch's property next to the university. This way the Church would pay for a larger percentage of the building fund with less money needing to be raised locally. The Gainesville branch would temporarily use the Institute as a chapel until a larger chapel was constructed on land that had just been purchased on the corner of NW 16th Boulevard and 38th Street. In 1961 the first LDS Institute Director, David Whitmer, was sent to Gainesville and 48 students enrolled in classes. Construction on the new building began soon thereafter as a joint project of the LDS Department of Education and the Gainesville branch. **This was the first LDS Institute of Religion building to be constructed east of the Rocky Mountains.** In 1961, seminary, the early morning religious instruction for high school students, also began with Stanley Schank, a university professor, as the instructor. The six students met at six every morning in the Schank home.

On Mother's Day, 1963, the branch moved into the \$100,000 Institute and the Gainesville Ward was created with Murray Shields as the first bishop and Earl Bedenbaugh and Swain Gull as his counselors. The first Junior Sunday School was begun for the three to eight-year-old children with Marie Johnson as the coordinator. When the new ward was created, the members were told that in five years they would need to move into larger quarters. This seemed impossible since the 50 that were attending meetings fit in the front third of the chapel and the Church was known for growing slowly in



Gainesville. In 1972 with the \$500,000 chapel on NW 16th Boulevard was completed, 200 squeezed into the Institute for Sunday meetings. The total membership grew just as astonishingly. In 1965, two years after moving to the Institute, the membership had doubled to 331. By 1970 there were 553 members. The growth was remarkable considering the great mobility of the members, with upwards from 100 members moving from Gainesville annually. In 1965 the last payment on the Institute building was made and the building was dedicated by Henry V. Jenkins, president of the Florida Stake. In 1967 the Church's Department of Education bought the ward's share of the building and a new building fund began. In the fall of 1968 the Florida Stake was divided and Gainesville became part of what was later named the Jacksonville Florida West Stake.

By 1971 the growth of the Church in Gainesville was so rapid a chapel was built that could house two congregations at once. In June of 1972 the ward moved into the new chapel, which seats 250 for regular Sunday meetings, but expands into its cultural hall to seat 1,000 for special conferences. That fall, Chester Tillman, a university professor, became bishop with Vernie Corbett and Winfield Broadhurst as counselors.

In 1973 the Institute was remodeled and in September it became the meeting place for a student-operated branch of the Church. When the Washington, D.C. Temple was dedicated in the fall of 1974, one third of the choir members allotted to the stake were from Gainesville as was the organist for the dedication, Lauraine Seager.

By 1975 the Church in Gainesville had grown to almost 900 members. In November the student branch was reincorporated into the Gainesville Ward and two new wards were created: the Gainesville First Ward and Gainesville Second Ward.

On February 29, 1976, in the Jacksonville Coliseum, Howard W. Hunter, an Apostle presided over the conference and the Gainesville Stake (# 746) was created. James R. Christianson was called as stake president with Chester Tillman and Vernie Corbett as his counselors. The new Stake, the 11th to be created in Florida, had approximately 2,400 members.

On March 16, 1986, the Gainesville Stake was divided and the Lake City Florida Stake (#1590) was created.

Today, in 1996, there are 3,500 members of the Gainesville Florida Stake. Vernie K. Corbett, with a southern pioneer legacy presently (1997), serves as the Gainesville Florida Stake President.\*

Pres. Corbett was released in 1997. Called to follow Pres. Corbett was Brent Oscarmiller

*To whom it may concern: I wish hereby to bear testimony to the truth of the gospel as taught by the Latter-day Saints. I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet sent of God with a message of salvation to deliver unto men.*

*D.H. Arline*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*Kind friends: I feel to add my testimony to the divinity of the doctrine of the Latter-day Saints, and I thank God that He has permitted me to live when I could have the chance of accepting it in the flesh. This is always my testimony.*

*Mrs. M.V. Arline*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*Dear readers: I also wish to add my testimony to the truth of the gospel taught by the Mormons. I have been healed of sickness by its power a number of times and many other reasons I could readily give if there were space. I know it is the true plan of salvation.*

*Josephine Arline.*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*I know this is the true Church of Christ, and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. When the Elders are at our home I know they teach the true gospel. We are selling the Book of Mormon. We are trying to spread the gospel.*

*N.J. Woodwall*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*I know this is the true Church of Christ for I have been healed. I could not sit up. I saw my mother healed when she had been sick seven years. I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. This is my testimony in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

*Mamie Woodall*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*I know that this is the Church of Jesus Christ. I have a testimony that it is the Lord's work, and have reasons to say this. My wife had been sick seven years when the Elders came and administered to her. That night she had a good night's rest, and next morning she arose hungry and ate a good breakfast.*

*E. Woodall*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*



# ALBERT 'Ab' KIRKLAND

23 Nov 1891-5 May 1955

As remembered by his sons, Wilbur and Emory Kirkland

The Sanderson Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, organized September 10, 1897, was teetering between stability and unsteadiness at the turn of the century in Baker County, Florida. Albert Kirkland, fondly called Ab, was the first of 16 children born to early Columbia County converts, (18 Apr 1897) George and Nettie Kirkland. His early faith and testimony of the Church created in him a desire to see the fledgling branch survive.

A barber in Baker County by trade, he lived on a 20 acre farm north of Macclenny with his wife Eula Myra (Thomas) and five children: James Wilbur, Marguerite Anna, Emory Albert, Myra Ester and Clarice Nettie. (A son, George Elias, died as an infant). Serving as branch president in the early 1920's, he drove an old Dodge truck the 12 miles to Sanderson twice on Sundays to attend both morning and evening services. Two of his sons recall the events of those days vividly.

"We five children rode in the back of the truck and Mama and Daddy would throw an old quilt over our heads to keep us warm," said Emory. "More times than I care to remember we'd have a flat tire travelling to and from our meetings, but we all went rain or shine.

"I remember once when he had to use a non-member, the depot agent, Mr. Middleton, as an acting Sunday School superintendent," he continued.

"And we used an old Aladdin lamp for light in the building," he added.

"And a one-hole outdoor privy was our bathroom facilities for many years," recalled Wilbur.

Emory Kirkland still has the two-burner wood burning stove that kept the Sanderson Saints warm in cold



**Albert "Ab" Kirkland, circa 1953 with grandson Kirk Webster, 5 years old, butchering "Red", a 750-pound Duroc Hog.**

weather. Water was obtained by priming an outdoor water pump.

According to the brothers, the Sanderson membership eventually grew to more than 100 members.



**Sanderson Florida Branch  
1929 Sanderson Branch Church  
Dedication, State Road 125 North**

W.D. Mann, a member, donated Land for the church. Construction was supervised by an Elder Goodson who resided in Sanderson during the construction. Branch members donated time, Labor and Money. Total Cost Approximately \$1,500.00.

Information and photo I.D. given by Mattie Dobson Roberts, 1997, Sanderson, Florida

**Back Row:**

**Albert Kirkland, Branch President; George Dobson, and C.C. 'Clem' Fraser**  
**Middle Row, left to right:**  
**Warren Fraser, Wilber Kirkland and James Dobson**

**Front Row:**

**Left, Paul Mann, right unidentified**



The Kirklands opened their Macclenny home to countless missionaries throughout the years, furnishing them with food, clean clothes, and a place to sleep.

"We would go downtown with them to hold their street meetings," remembered Emory.

"Not too many people showed up though," said Wilbur.

"Even though his health wasn't good, he was a faithful man," recalled Wilbur.

His brother agreed.



*First Church Building in Sanderson, Florida*



***Sanderson, Florida Church Members circa 1912***

*Standing in rear, left to right: Joe Mann, Tommie Mann, George Mann.*

*Standing left to right: Leonard Arline, Gladys Mann, young boy with hat, Emory Woods, Sadie Mann, Kitty Mann.*

*Men standing at right of photo: Henry Wester, William D. Mann, Judge Mann holding baby Harold Mann in arms (young boy with hat standing at left Owen Mann, smaller boy at right Fred Mann.)*

*Children sitting on top step, Left to right: Sellie Green, Reid Green, Donald Dobson, Wilber Dobson, Ernest Woods and Dick Green.*

*Two little girls sitting on the lower (first step) are cousins Mabel Mann and Mattie Dobson.*

*Photo ID made in 1997 by Mattie Dobson of Sanderson, Florida*

#### **BAPTISMS IN COLUMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA REPORTED IN 1896 CONFERENCE**

NAME	DATE
1. James Buchanan Wright .....	10 April 1896
2. Arkina Keen .....	14 May 1896
3. Henry L. Wilson .....	20 July 1896
4. Synnthia A. Wilson .....	20 July 1896
5. Sarah L. Wright .....	26 July 1896
6. Lenora Smith .....	24 Aug 1896
7. Henrietta Tucker .....	27 Aug 1896
8. Jackson S. Wright .....	6 Sept 1896
9. Isabella Nixon .....	6 Sept 1896
10. William Noeget .....	10 Sept 1896
11. Azziebell Wright .....	7 Oct 1896
12. Sarah Melton .....	24 Nov 1896
13. Noah E. Fry .....	10 Dec 1896
14. Charles F. Melton .....	19 Dec 1896
15. James A. Wright .....	20 Dec 1896

Source: Call # CR 3758: Reel # 2189, Historical Dept. of LDS Church Archives, SLC Utah

Researched by Vella V. Tilton 26 Dec 1995

#### **BAPTISMS IN COLUMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA REPORTED IN 1897 CONFERENCE**

NAME	DATE
1. Asa Edw. Wright .....	3 Jan 1897
2. Rebecca Lane Waldron .....	23 Feb 1897
3. Georgia Keen Hodges .....	23 Feb 1897
4. Bertha Hodges .....	23 Feb 1897
5. Geo. G.K. Hodges .....	23 Feb 1897
6. Edmond Tray Rogerson .....	9 Mar 1897
7. Catherine Waldron .....	22 Apr 1897
8. Idell Wiggins .....	22 Apr 1897
9. Geo. G. Keen .....	24 Apr 1897
10. Geo. C. Kirkland .....	18 Apr 1897
11. Nettie C. Kirkland .....	18 Apr 1897
12. Alice Melton .....	18 Apr 1897
13. Edith Register .....	18 Apr 1897
14. Lizzie T. Hines .....	18 Apr 1897
15. Louisa Melton .....	18 Apr 1897

Source: Call # CR 3758. Reel # 2189. Historical Dept. of LDS Church Archives. SLC,Utah

Researched by Vella Valentine Tilton, 26 Sept 1995.



The following has been written by Jennie Neubeck Dupont, the only daughter of J.C. Neubeck, the first known LDS Church member known to have settle in Miami. She is presently (1996) living with her daughter, at the age of 90, in Jacksonville, Florida. A detailed history of the Church in Miami has been compiled by Robert B. Butler (1986).

#### Dade County

J.C. Neubeck , an employee in the machine shop of the Florida East Coast Railroad, was the first known member of the Church of Jesus Christ to settle in Miami. He moved there with his family in 1907 from Palatka, Florida, to help extend the railroad to Key West. Following him, was the second member of the Church, Sister Laura Pinder. Next came Brother David Spencer and his family from Canada.

The first traveling missionaries said to have come to Miami were Elders Reed Gardner and George Carr. They arrived in the winter of 1909. Missionaries came to Miami in the winter time, and when they did they would hold cottage meetings and the Church grew. For 18 years all the Church meetings were held in the home of J.C. Neubeck.

On November 17, 1914, J.C. Neubeck was ordained an Elder by Charles A. Callis, President of the Southern States Mission in Miami and then called to fill a seven-month mission in West Florida and South Georgia. He was set apart for his mission by the Church president



**1st Meeting Place:  
Home of J.C. Neubeck**

Joseph F. Smith. He was the first local Elder from Miami to fill a mission and when he returned in 1915, he was set apart as the presiding Elder over the Saints in Miami. The first sister to be called , on a mission was

his only child Jennie Neubeck. She filled a four-and-a-half month's mission in 1927, and a year in 1930-31. She labored in the mission office in Atlanta, Georgia.

When Elder Neubeck returned from his mission, he was the presiding Elder of the members in the Miami area. Several families had moved there so the meetings were held as far north as Ft. Lauderdale and Pompano. Later when the town of Hollywood was begun, cottage meetings were held there.

On November 14, 1920, 18 members met on Miami Beach on which the present site of the MacFadden-Deauville Hotel stands. A Sunday School was organized

#### **2nd Meeting Place: Upstairs in the Vereen Hall**



and J.C.

Neubeck was

set apart as

superintendent with H.L. Russell, 1st assistant, J.W. McAlister, 2nd. Assistant, and Annie Fisher, as secretary. For a few weeks we held the Sunday School at the home of Electa S. Johnson on Miami Beach, then it was moved to the home of J.C. Neubeck where it was held for the next six years. One class was held in the house, one off the porch, one in the yard, and another in an automobile. Due to the crowded conditions and the increased attendance, we rented Vereen Hall, North Miami Avenue and 4th Streets for the next six months. Then we moved to the home of H.L. Russell, 654 N.W. 29th Street for four months. Then we met at the Odd Fellow's Hall, N.W. 2nd. Ave. & 4th Streets for the next six months, and later we went to the Carpenter's Hall, N. Miami Ave. & 38th Street for about three years.

In 1924 a Relief Society was organized at the home of Sister Ruby Robinson with Mary Padgett, President; Lizzie Turner, 1st Counselor; Lorena Russell, 2nd. Counselor; and Nellie Cunningham, secretary.

The young people's Mutual Improvement Association was organized in Sept 1930 with Frank Pulham, Pres of the Young Men and Nellie Cunningham, Young Women's President.

In 1928 land was purchased by the Church on the corner of N.W. 29th St. and 6th. Ave.

In 1930 the building was completed by traveling missionaries and local members assisting in the work. It was opened by President Charles A. Callis in April, 1930 for services. It was dedicated by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith of the Council of the Twelve in November, 1930.

In 1931 A Primary organization was organized with Miss Dorothy Slay called as head.



**3rd Meeting Place:  
H.L. Russell home**





**4th Meeting Place:  
Odd Fellows Hall**

## BRANCH PRESIDENTS

- 1- J.C. Neubeck called to preside 1915 and released Sept. 13, 1936
- 2- Ray Erickson set apart Sept. 17, 1936—released May 10, 1937
- 3- E.W. Erickson set apart May 10, 1937—released June 26, 1938
- 4- J.C. Neubeck set apart June 26, 1938—released Mar 10, 1940
- 5- Benjamin Wilkerson set apart Mar 10, 1940—released Feb 2, 1941

- 6- E.D. Erickson set apart Mar 2, 1941—released Sept 6, 1942
- 7- Russell Zetterower set apart Sept 6, 1942—released Aug 13, 1944
- 8- William J. Barfield set apart Aug 13, 1944—released Dec 2, 1945
- 9- James Cornia set apart Dec 2, 1945—released Dec. 8, 1946
- 10- William J. Barfield set apart Dec 8, 1946 (no release date listed)



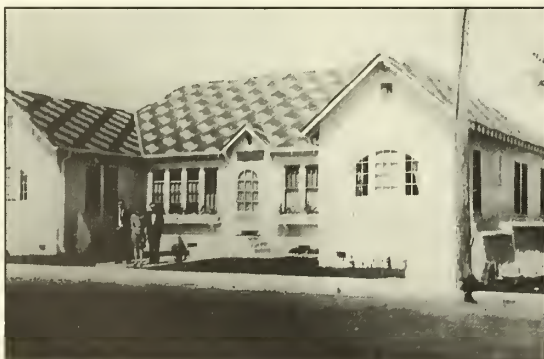
**5th Meeting Place:  
Carpenter's Hall**

## FROM THE DIARY OF J.C. NEUBECK

"On Sept 17-18, 1926, Miami suffered one of the worst hurricanes it had had in years. Fortunately none of our members lost their lives, however, some had narrow escapes. I would like to relate a few incidents that took place during that time.

"Brother Archie Brown of Logan, Utah, was living alone in a small place about 10 feet square in a tourist camp on N.W. 22nd Ave. and 20th. St. There was also another member, Brother Christensen and family, living in the camp. All the houses in the camp were blown away except those occupied by Brother Brown and Brother Christensen. There were about 25 small houses there. This is what Bro. Brown told me after the storm was over. His place was full of people, some crying and some praying. They asked him if he was not afraid and he said, 'no' that the Lord would protect him. Brother Christensen's

**Chapel  
in Miami  
May 30, 1937**



home was also full of people. They were sitting on his bed and a piece of timber 2x4x6 foot long came end wise through the side of the house and cut the iron post in half not hurting a single soul there. These two houses remained standing for several years after the storm.

Another incident that occurred during this time was at the baptism of Brother John Warren. He wanted to be baptized right after the storm and the ocean had not quieted down to normal. However, we went over to the beach to hold the baptism. I led Brother Warren out into the water and the waves were rolling so high I was about to give up, but through prayer on my part and Brother Archie Brown, who was present at the baptism, who also said he was praying for the water to be quiet. The Lord heard our prayers and suddenly the water

became very calm. I was able to baptize Brother Warren. This is a great testimony to me.

J.C. Neubeck

## FROM THE LIAHONA THE ELDER'S JOURNAL MAY 22, 1909

The elders were called to Miami, from Jacksonville, to administer to Brother Newbeck's little \*child who was very sick with fever. After the child had been administered to, its recovery was speedy, and in a short time it was eating a hearty meal.

Jennie Neubeck, his only child.

## FROM THE LIAHONA THE ELDER'S JOURNAL MAY 22, 1909

Jno. W. Blazzard, president, 1324 Claude Street, Jacksonville Branch conferences at Ebenezer (Columbia Co.) and Oldtown (Dixie Co.) were held during the month of April. These gatherings were very largely attended and the Oldtown Conference was held in a bowery on the banks of the historic Suwanee River. Between the morning and afternoon meetings, the sisters of the branch gave a dinner which was very much enjoyed by all present. A large number of strangers who had never heard the elders preach before were in attendance, and on these occasions the Elders and Saints had a spiritual feast.

# THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH IN WESCONNETT

By Florence Elizabeth Jammes  
Middleburg Ward, Duval County, Florida

In the 1930's about 50 faithful Saints, many of them related, lived in the Wesconnett section of west Jacksonville. In 1936, under the direction of the priesthood, we were organized into a Sunday School by Elder Thomas C. Copeland. We met regularly in rented buildings or members' homes for Sunday School, Relief Society and Primary. Those of us who could, attended the Park and Copeland Streets Chapel for Sacrament meeting.

On July 16, 1939, membership had increased and the group was organized as Wesconnett Branch. Among those called to serve were: Thomas C. Copeland, Branch President and John S. Stratton, Willim O. Copeland and Homer N. Jordan.

In the beginning the little branch met in the Old Wesconnett School Building located on the old Orange Park Road (now Wesconnett Blvd.).

As the young branch grew sufficiently in numbers, they needed a chapel. On February 26, 1942, the first chapel building was begun on Timuquana Road in Wesconnett. In the summer of 1942, the members moved into their new wood building which had been constructed on property donated by Sister Emma Reimer, a faithful and dedicated member. It was heated in winter by a coal and wood heater and cooled in the summer with pedestal fans. The chapel was dedicated November 15, 1942, by Nicholas G. Smith, an assistant to the Twelve. We had no paid custodian until many years later, but the members were so grateful for their own new building that they kept it spotlessly clean.

When the Florida Stake was organized on January 19, 1947, the Wesconnett Branch became one of the wards in the newly-formed stake. William O. Copeland was called to serve as the first Bishop and James N. Copeland and Floyd Parker were his counselors. After a short term of service as ward clerk, John A. Dillaberry was released. James D. Davis was then called and served as clerk



**Bishops of the Jacksonville 4th Ward**  
Front Row: William O. Copeland and William F. Boxx.  
Back Row: Marvin E. Smith Jr., John B. Perry,  
Clayton J. Perry

to Bishop Copeland and three succeeding bishops.

On November 13, 1949, William F. Boxx was called as bishop. During his term of office, on June 16, 1957, the name Wesconnett Ward was changed to Jacksonville Fourth Ward.

Under Bishop Boxx's leadership the ward grew in activity and numbers. An addition of classrooms and a larger kitchen was added to the building. A building fund program was begun to construct a new chapel.

On January 20, 1960, Bishop Boxx was released and Marvin E. Smith, Sr. was sustained as Bishop. Under his leadership, the ward continued to grow in numbers and increased activity. The building fund grew and the construction of a new chapel became a serious part of the activity of the ward's membership.



**The old Wesconnett school bldg. where a LDS Sunday School was organized January 1936. Later a branch was organized July 16, 1939 in the same building.**

*Pictured left to right, beginning front row:*  
Carlos Chesser, Murriel Griffin, Louise Hill, John Dillaberry (?), Richard Hill, Paul Copeland, Donald Hill (with hand over face), William H. Griffin, Myrtle Chesser, William O., Lucille, Nora, Leon, and Thomas C. Copeland, Elizabeth and Lorraine Atkinson, Leo, Thomas, and Mary Hill, Hettie, Thelma, Jean, and Gloria Atkinson, Jessie Lou Croft, Ruth Croft Hawkins, Mattie Griffin and baby, Bowden Griffin and William H. Jammes.



On January 20, 1962, Clayton J. Perry became bishop of the ward. During his term of service, ground was broken on October 24, 1966, for a new chapel on Firestone Road in west Jacksonville. The first services were held there on June 18, 1967. He was released September 10, 1967, when John B. Perry was called.

Three new wards were created on January 19, 1992 and Fourth Ward was dissolved at the time. The new wards were Ortega, Timuquana, and Normandy wards. On April 23, 1995, Ortega Ward was dissolved and combined with the Normandy Ward. David Randall Atkins was called as Bishop. Serving as first counselor, Harold C. Shumpert, and second counselor David C. Newton. Called on November 12, 1995, as Bishop of the Timuquana Ward was Charles A. Nichols, with first counselor Wilford Petersen and second counselor Stanley Ferreira, Sr.

After the division of the Florida Stake on September 15, 1968, two new stakes were created called Jacksonville Florida West Stake and Jacksonville Florida East Stake. Firestone Chapel became the stake center for the West Stake. On June 20, 1976, services were held in a new stake center on Blanding Blvd. in Orange Park. Today, many of the original Fourth Ward members, or their descendants attend meetings in one or more of the above mentioned created wards, or that of Fleming Island where a group of Saints meet in a rented building at this time.

*Note: The maternal grandparents of Florence Elizabeth Jammes, James E. and Lougenia Wilford Turknnett were among the early converts in 1898 to join the Church in Jacksonville. Her mother, and several other members of her extended family were baptized in Jacksonville in 1913.*

*Sister Jammes and her husband, William H. Jammes, were among the original 50 members when the Wesconnett Sunday School was organized in 1936. The above dates used in her memory of the Church's growth in this area were taken from her personal journals and archives of the church in SLC Utah. See the Florence Elizabeth Jammes entry.*

## HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA, NEWS ARTICLE

(No date, or name of newspaper given on news article)  
**NO MORMONS ADMITTED**

To superintendents and patrons: Whereas, it has come to the knowledge of the board of public instruction that several supervisors in the county of Hillsborough have granted permission to certain Mormon Elders to use the public schoolhouse for the purpose of conducting meetings: Be it resolved, that supervisors and patrons are hereby notified that such use of the public school build-

ings is strictly forbidden.

By order of the board of public instruction.

L.W. Buchholz  
Secretary and County Superintendent

## MADISON CITY, MADISON COUNTY, FLORIDA, MAY 11, 1897

Elders W.G. Fisher and Samuel Isom entered the above city which indeed was a bitter place. It had been canvassed about a year previous by Elders Frank H. Cutler and Frank South. At first Elders Fisher and Isom visited the Mayor whom they found to be a fair-minded man. He granted them the privilege of preaching on the streets. All churches and public buildings were closed against them. Hotels refused to entertain them. The newspaper refused an interview and rather fostered a spirit of indignation. For two weeks they worked in and around the city holding 14 meetings, sold two Books of Mormon, gave away several V of W, with tracts, dogers, and cards. The last day of their preaching in the city they were quietly told by a friend that a mob was there in readiness to escort them out of the county. Rather than cause any disturbances, they gave the mob the dodge and left the town. Much good was done through the humble labors of these Elders and some day the Gospel seeds sown will bear fruit.

Source: Historical Department, Film Florida District part 1 1893-1942, section Record of Members Early to 1897 Historians Office Library #2103 pg. 243.

## SOUTHERN STATES MISSION NEWS NOV 14, 1908

President O.W. Hyde, 1324 Claude St., Jacksonville. On Oct 3rd and 4th a very successful branch conference was held at Madison. Nine Elders were in attendance. The meetings were held in a schoolhouse, which was taxed to its capacity to care for the large crowd in attendance. The Elders delivered very interesting talks, which were received in the same spirit by the congregation. Too much praise cannot be given to the members of the Church and their friends who made the conference possible and who manifested great interest. Elders J.W. Blizzard, Thaddeus Walker and James H. Moore are making a tour of the conference visiting all the members and instructing them in their duties.

President O.W. Hyde

## SUWANNEE COUNTY, FLORIDA SECTION

“Several attempts were made to capture us, but all in vain till one time I was alone the day after Elders Jos. A. West, T.F. Wasden and J.W. Musser left me. About one hundred men armed to the teeth with guns and pistols surrounded the house of Brother W.H. Redding near Live Oak and succeeded in getting their hands on me. They said I must leave their county, which with their assistance I did on the first train. After packing my grip, they ordered me to take a carriage which led the procession to the depot in Live Oak. Here they registered me at the hotel as a guest of the citizens of Suwannee County. On the platform of the depot defaming speeches were made to about three hundred people by the leaders of the mob. After thirty minutes speaking, the train pulled up and they placed me on board with a first class ticket to Chattanooga, Tenn. By this time the crowd had increased and the train departed amid cheers and jeers of the scoffers. I went as far as Waycross, Georgia, on that train where I remained two days and sold my tickets for \$8.25 and returned to Suwannee Valley, Columbia County, Florida. The names of the leading committee numbering five are: Rawley Newlen, Charlie McLarring, Luther Whitfield, a Mr. Lainer and John Robinson.”

(Taken from Elder W.G. Fisher's journal of the mobbing in Suwannee County Florida, December 1896 and reported in the Minutes of the Florida Conference)

The following information was received in a letter dated November 4, 1986 from Grant Allen Anderson, Manager, Library Services in the Historical Department LDS Church, Salt Lake City, to Agnes Grantham, historian in the Live Oak Ward. Letter is edited for brevity.

Missionary work in Suwannee County area began in November 1895. It seems that missionary work ended around 1900 when missionaries moved farther south towards Orlando.

“On June 28, 1896 President Joseph A. West and Elders C.J. Brown, W.H. Summerhays and W.G. Fisher organized the Woodruff Sabbath School, named for Church President, Wilford Woodruff, 5 miles west of Live Oak in Suwannee County, Florida.

Brother Perry Voyles Supt. and Bros. H.B. Hodges and Brackson J. Voyles Assistants. M.H. Redding Secy. and Joseph Lamb Assistant. W.H. Redding, Librarian and John Miles Assist. John Jowers Treasurer.

Number of Teachers 6, Total number of officers, teachers and pupils 42.”

(Journal of W.G. Fisher reported in the Florida Conference Minute Book)

The letter further stated.

“Enclosed are the only references we can find of missionary work in the Suwannee County area.”

## LIVE OAK, SUWANNEE COUNTY, FLORIDA JULY 22, 1896

That items of progress in the work of the Lord may be portrayed to all interested, I beg a small space necessary in your much esteemed and appreciated paper.

This county (Suwannee) became for the first time the recipient of so-called ‘Mormon’ Elders November 9, 1895. On entering it there were found to be but few people who had ever heard of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Some few, however, had heard of the Mormon people. In conjunction with my companion, Elder G.W. Rogers, work was commenced to real earnest and soon the principles of the Gospel were being revealed to many attentive listeners.

We called on Mr. Whitfield, editor of The Banner, who through the columns of his valuable paper invited his many patrons to hear us before judging and treat us with due respect as ministers of the Gospel. Mr. Whitfield still remains a warm friend, and for the great help he has given through The Banner at various times, we entertain deepest regard.

At present we have thirty-four members, all of whom have been converted and baptized within the last eight months. On the 28th of last month we organized a Sunday School with an enrollment of forty-two. Since that time it has increased to fifty-four. In honor of our dear leader, it bears the name of the Woodruff Sunday School. We are now in possession of four acres of land on which an arbor was built for the convening of conference and in another place one acre on which stands a church, that was given us by W.H. Redding, where we are permitted to meet in worship and Sunday School capacity.

Some of the Saints whose heads are silvered, at times are caused to weep in thought that all these years they have been laboring in darkness and have been deprived of the true Gospel and the many blessings which follow the believer.

There is but little sickness among the Elders of this conference and all are working with great zeal with a view of being designated on the plains and glory like suns and stars in the firmament of heaven and bear the laurels of immortal fame which crown the achievements of those who bear the cross with the celestial power



above, whose cross will lead us on to victory and add immortal luster to our names.

W.G. Fisher  
(Deseret News 53:249 Southern States Mission  
Manuscript History: July 22, 1896)

## AN INCIDENT IN PIONEER LDS FLORIDA

(As written by A.O. Jenkins, 1st Counselor in Florida District Presidency, August 1944. Contributed by Lawrence Maddock of Pensacola, Florida.)

“My grandfather, Perry Voyles, had been a member of what was known as the Campbellite Church, but had not attended any church for several years. He was a great Bible student, and gave as his reason for not attending church that none of them were organized like the Savior organized His Church. He was often heard to say that he prayed before he died that the Lord would organize His Church, and he would have the privilege of hearing the true Gospel.

“When my Grandfather was around seventy years of age, he had a dream. This dream impressed him very much and he told it to his family numerous times. He said that he dreamed two young men, wearing long-tailed coats, derby hats, and carrying satchels came to see him and told him that they had the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Late one afternoon about 1895, which was just a short time after my Grandfather’s dream, Elders Roger and Fisher came into Suwannee County, Florida, and stopped in the neighborhood at a place where neighbors had assembled for a Log Rolling. The Elders assisted in piling or rolling the logs and became acquainted with the men. At night they were asked in to dinner. After the dinner there was a dance....then called a frolic. They had no one to play the fiddle, but found that Elder Fisher could play, so he played the fiddle for the dance.

“One of my Grandfather’s sons attended the Log Rolling and brought the two Elders home with him. The next morning when my Grandfather saw them he immediately said they were the men he dreamed about. He persuaded the Elders to remain in his home several days. During this time he talked to them most of the night and day, and within a few weeks both he and his wife were baptized. They were, perhaps, the first to be baptized in Florida. Shortly after, about ten or twelve of

his sons and daughters were baptized.

“The Elders were permitted to preach in several school houses and held many cottage meetings and soon had baptized some eighteen or twenty people. This was the beginning of the Gospel in Florida.

“The first Florida Conference under the direction of Elias S. Kimball, President of the Southern States Mission, and conducted by Elder Joseph A. West, was held in Suwannee County about eight miles west of Live Oak, Florida under a bowery, and was attended by some one hundred people or more. Many of the people traveled as far as fifty miles by horse and wagon to attend this Conference.

“Shortly after the first Conference, persecution began to arise, due to jealousies among the different churches. A mob of between fifty and one hundred men took Elder Fisher to the depot, put him on the train and warned him never to return. This, however, did not discourage Elder Fisher, as he returned to Suwannee County in about two months time and baptized several people who had told him they wanted to be baptized.

“During this time of these persecutions, Elder West was taken ill and confined to his bed for several weeks. The mob visited him and gave him one week to leave the county. Five members of the mob entered President West’s room, and after they had delivered their message, President West asked who was the captain of the mob and requested that he come near his bed. President West took him by the hand, called him by name, and said, ‘You have this day led a mob against the servants of God, and I prophesy in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the Lord will not be satisfied at punishing you for the dead, but will visit His judgments on your entire family’. This man was one of the county’s wealthiest men. In a few years he had lost all of his property and died with tuberculosis. He had a large family of healthy boys and girls and all died with tuberculosis.

“On one occasion at a baptismal service, President West prophesied that Florida would become one of the most fruitful fields of the Church, and would be one of the largest conferences in all of the missions of the world.

“The second Florida Conference was held at Sanderson. There was present about twenty five traveling Elders. They were making their headquarters at Brother Canova’s who was a very devout member of the Church. President Kimball was also present at this con-

ference. The attendance at this conference was much greater than the first conference and many of the Saints and their friends traveled by horse and wagon, and at night they slept in barns and hay lofts.

“Some few months after the second conference, Brother Canova was murdered. It is believed that this was done, due to Brother Canova’s activities in the Mormon Church. It is recorded in the Church records that Brother Canova died a martyr.

“One of the Church Authorities while dedicating a Florida chapel, looked out and said he saw temple spires, and prophesied that in time to come a temple would be erected in Florida. This has not yet come to pass, however, the Florida members are looking forward to this great event.

“The wonderful progress of the Mormon Church for the past fifty years erases the remembrance of the persecution and martyrdom of our early days.”

## THE PEOPLE OF OAK GROVE

Union County

The following narrative has been written by Imogene Nettles (Mrs. Felton) Smith of Lake Butler, Florida, who was born and who grew up in the Oak Grove section. She is a fourth generation Latter-day Saint, and was baptized September 8, 1940, in Swift Creek in a place known as ‘The Rock Hole’ which was located by Oak Grove Church about two-hundred yards behind her parents 40 acre farm. While many of the early Church families sold their surrounding properties after World War II to large paper companies and moved into larger cities to find work, the Nettles’ family kept their property and continued to live there through the generations. Their individual stories, and more about the Oak Grove section, can be found in the Nettles’ family section of this book.

## THE GOOD ‘OLE’ DAYS

By Imogene Nettles Smith

We still hear them referred to as ‘The good old days’ and in many ways they were. There was plenty of time to visit and have get togethers for the purpose of doing the many

things that had to be done by hand in those days. There was no modern machinery such as we have today.

A common occurrence was for the women to cook a special dish or two and several families in the community would gather at one’s home where the women would bring the food and things for quilting. The men would bring saws and axes, or what ever tools were needed. All morning the ladies would quilt and the men would saw wood and split it. In this way everyone always had enough wood on hand, and no home lacked for beautiful, warm patch work quilts. There would be enough for every bed regardless of the size of the family.

The children would play or fish in the creek. At noon the bounteous meal was spread and enjoyed by one and all. In the afternoon the work would continue until time for everyone to leave for their homes and a night of welcome rest.

This was a common way of getting the work done. Whether it was a barn raising, (building a new barn), or helping to build or repair someone’s house, neighbors helped neighbors.



*First Oak Grove Chapel near Providence, Florida*



Sometimes in the late afternoon or evening, if there was someone there who could play a musical instrument, there would be dancing, singing along, and, clapping hands to the music. This was a happy, peaceful time, a time of less hurry and rush, though the work was hard and long were the days.

The older school age children would have to arise early and milk the cows, feed the stock, help with breakfast cooked on the old wood-burning stove. The wood was brought in the night before, and water brought in a bucket, pumped by hand, or drawn from the outside well.

To get to school, the children walked many miles. Sometimes they went to school in a horse and buggy. They took their lunch from home and also had to take fodder for the horse so he could eat lunch also.

School was a one-room building with one teacher who taught from first to sixth or eighth grades. In the early days the students studied from a chart like a calendar. Because the students were housed in one room, each age group heard the lessons of all the classes.

Halloween pranks were common then as now. One of the more daring ones, I'm told, was for the older students to run away from school, thereby upsetting the teachers very much. At Midway School, about the year 1930, several members of the Nettles family were among the runners. After getting about half way to Lake Butler, two of the young ladies, Beatrice and Willa Mae, 'chickened out', (a common saying for being afraid). Willa Mae reported she got the 'hot seat' from her father when she returned home that afternoon. She said it was the only time she ever got her dad that upset.

Mr. Alonzo Blackwelder was the principal of the school in those days. Every morning the students would have chapel and after Bible reading, and the Lord's Prayer, he would call all offenders up who would be punished. They would march across the stage in front of the whole school and get two or three licks across the shoul-

ders with a gallberry switch. Needless to say offenses were few in those days.

Parties held in neighbor's homes were the most common form of entertainment. Any occasion was good for a party. Since there were few, if any, automobiles, and just about everyone in a given area were kin folks, the gatherings would usually be made up of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends. The Easter party was a special time. Everyone would bring decorated eggs and delicious food. The young men of courting age would usually bring a pound of candy. After the egg hunt there would be a scrumptious meal, then dancing and games. If someone had a car there would be rides for all the young ladies. My Aunt Rosa told me, "You can bet the young ladies kept an eye out for the fellow with the fancy car," and I suppose that has not changed at all in the last 60 years.

Yes, those were some good old days, but there were also some days when things were not so good. Like during the Depression when folks with large families had to share what they had one with another, when several sisters had one pair of shoes between them and would have to take turns wearing them so they could go courting. But these were the times when family love and loyalty was strong, and no one felt poor because all the people around were in the same financial condition. We didn't consider anyone poor because there was food grown on the farm, and the necessities of life were provided for through hard work and labor. Most important of all was the feeling of being loved, and having the security that comes from being a member of a family where each one cared about the other. It was special being a part of a community of aunts, uncles, grandparents, caring neighbors, and especially where burdens, and joys were shared by one and all.

Well, many of these customs and traditions have passed away, but many of the same things that made life a pleasure then still exists among us today. It's true we all seem to be rushing somewhere all the time, but just let a person have trouble, or be in need, and you will see how quickly loved ones, friends, and neighbors are there.

All the good old days are not gone. They are still with us and will be as long as we have love in our hearts for our fellow man.

## A MEMORY FROM HAZEL KEENE DELGADO

My parents were John Wiley Keene, baptized April 26, 1897, into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Leona



*Oak Grove Church and Cemetery in 1970.*

Hammons Keene baptized September 18, 1908. She was welcomed into the Church by letter from Orson W. Hyde. My earliest memories were of my mother being a very faithful and active member. She played the organ and piano at Oak Grove. The music and songs were mailed to her for conference and many other occasions. She taught herself how to change round notes to shape notes so she could play the songs. She served as a counselor in the first Relief Society at Oak Grove, and later became the president.

Our home was always open to the leaders and missionaries who came.

---

Imogene Nettles Smith  
with five day old  
granddaughter  
Rebecca Lynn Driggers  
1975



Oak Grove Dinner on the Ground



Oak Grove Church



*As a note of interest:*

*Prior to the organization of the Florida District a farewell program was presented on January 20, 1934, by the Young Men's and Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association at the Park and Copeland Streets Chapel in honor of President and Mrs. Charles A. Callis. The MIA slogan for 1934 was "Inspired by the refining influences of Mormonism we will develop the gifts within us."*

*The M.I.A. Orchestra was composed of J.J. Rast, George Hattem, U.S. Bailie, Herman Gordon and L.J. Maddock.*

## FLORIDA DISTRICT

From original minutes, as well as supplemented data  
Photos taken by Evelyn S. Tilton of San Mateo, Florida

CREATED APRIL 25, 1937

### FLORIDA DISTRICT PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL

#### PRESIDENCY

James R. Boone, President; set apart  
by Leo Beck

Brother William R. Woods, First  
Counselor; set apart by President  
James R. Boone

Alvin C. Chace, Second Counselor;  
set apart by President James R.  
Boone

Joseph S. Copeland, Clerk; set apart  
by President LeGrand Richards

Harvey Avery, Clerk



**FLORIDA DISTRICT PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL 1939**

**Kneeling:** T.C. Copeland, Jacksonville; L.H. Brimhall, Jacksonville; Woodrow W. Tilton, San Mateo; Hugo Legler, Tampa; Otho Starling, Jacksonville and Leolin Dickey, Jacksonville

**Standing:** William F. Tilton, San Mateo; James R. Boone, A.O. Jenkins, Jacksonville; Roy Douberty, Orlando; Alvin C. Chace, Jacksonville; W.H. Mayo, Tampa; Joseph Copeland, Jax.; Daniel Carter, Palatka; Harvey Avery and A.R. Comer, New Smyrna.



**Florida District Presidents**

Left to right: Alvin C. Chace – Counselor,  
W. R. Woods – Counselor, James R. Boone – President,  
Joseph Copeland – Clerk, and Harvey Avery – Clerk



**Florida District Council**

Left to right, kneeling: Brothers Copeland, Brimhall, W.W. Tilton, Legler, Starling, Dickey. Left to right, standing: W.F. Tilton, Jenkins, Douberty, Mayo, Carter, Comer.



## RELIEF SOCIETY BOARD

Elsie Starling, President

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

James N. Copeland, Superintendent

## YMMIA

Russell Zetterower, President

## YWMIA

Florence Brimhall, President

## PRIMARY

Vella Valentine Tilton of Palatka and San Mateo, served as Florida District Primary Superintendent for ten years, 1936–1946. With other board members she supervised Primaries in Jacksonville, Lake City, Oak Grove, St. Augustine, San Mateo, Palatka, Orlando, Tampa and Miami. During most of this time Leadership meetings were held monthly. They alternated meetings in San Mateo one month and Tampa the next. The Primary leadership meetings were under the supervision of the superintendent, and board members gave instructions in each department.

During the time Sister Tilton served she married (1937), gave birth to three children, miscarried one child and was expecting her fourth child when difficulty prompted her release.

She also served as superintendent of the San Mateo Primary from 1940 to 1947 in addition to her District duties.

Florida District board counselors were:



**FLORIDA DISTRICT PRIMARY BOARD**

*Left to right: Mary Hill, Margaret Melvin, Blanche Tilton, Edith Rudd Dorrough, Vella Tilton, Ruth Boone, Clara V. Smith, Ruth Stafford.*

From original minutes of organization  
1937

April 30 and May 1, 2, April 30th District Presidency, clerk and many Saints in Atlanta for Mission Jubilee and Conference. President Heber J. Grant, Apostle Charles A. Callis and Leo Roy C. Snow of Salt Lake were in

attendance.

May 9th Branch Conference held in St. Augustine. Council meeting held and advisability of starting church security movement. Also genealogical organization and Young ladies MIA discussed

May 16 Branch Conference held in Palatka and council meeting held in which it was decided to release William R. Woods as president of the Orlando Branch and appoint Roy P. Douberly in his stead. Also decided to organize Elders quorum in Jacksonville.

## July 4th GENEALOGICAL ORGANIZATION

Grace R. Gleaton, President

October 23. Missionary banquet at Seminole Hotel. On Saturday a reception at the chapel in Jacksonville for President and Sister Boone who has just returned from Salt Lake City having been married in the Salt Lake Temple. This affair took place at 8 p.m. Sister Boone was formerly Sister Ruth Flake from Snowflake, Arizona. Having recently filled a full term mission in the Southern States mission. Labored in the South Georgia District, Yeargin District and West South Carolina District.

October 24. In Jacksonville. Dist. presidency held counsel meeting, all present with exception of Joseph S. Copeland, Clerk due to an infected ear. Invocation by Pres. Boone. Report by Elders W.A. Woods and Alvin C. Chace. Discussed another Elders quorum. All men in District office must pay tithes and obey Word of Wisdom or resign. Program to be given in Sanderson Branch by MIA.

Nov 7. Met in San Mateo. All present. A careful list of minutes to be kept of each council meeting. District stationery to be distributed among Dist. presidency next Union meeting in Jacksonville. Pres. Woods appointed to write a letter to each missionary from this District.

Nov 14. Thelma Hart Dickey set apart 2nd counselor in District Genealogy Dept. Hazel Wilford set apart Y.L.M.I.A. Dist. Dancing director. Ida Starling set apart as District teacher in Relief Society. Elders Hugo Legler, Otho Starling and Leolin N. Dicky all set apart as members of high council.

Nov 27. Orlando Chapel dedicated by Elder Stephen L. Richards. Elders Chace and Copeland not present. Talk by Pres. Roy Douberly.

Nov 28. Elder Chace presents the Gold and Green Ball problem for the season as to where it will be held. No decision made at present. Elder Chace presents the debt of the Rodeo Stadium at San Mateo. Our decision was held over to be presented before the high council. Met with high council at 10 a.m. The names of Earl Walter Starling and Thomas Perry Pearce to be ordained to the



Melchizedek priesthood. President Boone suggested a plan of selling tickets in advance for the following season rodeo and program which would be held at the stadium. The ticket selling drive to be a district affair and to be presented to the MIA District board for approval and action. The plan was accepted. Ticket for the event to be \$1 per adult but 75 cents in advance of the purpose of meeting the debt for the material.



**Aaronic Priesthood Class, Springfield Branch  
9th and Market Streets, Jacksonville, Florida,  
circa early 1940s**

Left to right, first row: District counselor, A. O. Jenkins, Ronnie Brannen, Billy Forsyth, Pete Philen, Lewis Wright and Branch President Jacquard M. Lindsey

Second row: Julian Murray, Dudley Anderson, John T. Valentine

Back row: Bob Jordan, Ted Forsyth and Bob Murray

Dec 19. District presidency met at Oak Grove accompanied by Sister Boone and Hazel Wilford and Retha Dukes for the purpose of investigating the Oak Grove Branch and the few members in and around Lake City To determine as to whether they should be made a part of the Florida District to be governed and presided over by the Florida District presidency or continue a part of the West Florida Dist. Elder Smith President of the West Florida

District was present. A meeting was held at Oak Grove in the morning, a meeting at Lake City in the p.m. at Brother Douberly's home. The consideration of the change was put to a vote at each meeting and agreed to be changed to the Florida District.

*On December 7, 1939, the following notation is made concerning a stake organization by Elder Widtsoe to District Officers.*

Weekly meeting at Jax Branch. Opening prayer by Pres. Jas. R. Boone. Discussed the fruits of the conference and some advice by Elder Widtsoe to District Officers. Quote: "When attending District meetings take your places on stand and don't wait for an invitation." Stated, he thought the District would be ready for a stake organization within a year. (Note: Eight years would pass before this became a reality).

*The minutes of the Florida District were faithfully kept in order, and continue with an exact account of the Florida District business. The last entry on January 19, 1947. read:*

**January 19, 1947.** On this historical date, the general authorities, Elders Charles A. Callis and Harold B. Lee of the Council of 12 were seated on the stand with James R. Boone as the Florida District president, with A.O. Jenkins and Carlos L. Padgett as counselors. The Florida District presidency and all officers and associates were released and became a matter of history.

The Florida Stake was born with Alvin C. Chace as president with Jacquard M. Lindsey and E. Coleman Madsen as counselors, with James E. Hill and Joseph C. Johns as clerks.

The old district organization had continued ten years lacking a few days. The faithful, untiring labors of its president, James R. Boone and counselors, are due a world of credit for guiding its people to progress during these years making it possible for stakehood, the first of its kind east of the Mississippi. I now sign off conclusive with the district officers, wishing God speed to the new stake.

Joseph Copeland, Clerk.



**July 22, 1934 — Park and Copeland**

Right to left: Beginning with #4 Garad Rudd, #5 William Henry Chace, #6 L.H. Brimhall, #9 Albert Kirkland, #10 Leolin Dickey, #13 Brother Brown.

Second Row: #4 Brother Tilton, #10 Brother Solina.

Third Row: #1 Emerson McComber, #6 G.I. Williams.

# ORIGINAL FLORIDA STAKE AND STAKES DERIVED THEREFROM

\* No dates available

## Florida Stake — organized January 19, 1947

Alvin C. Chace January 19, 1947 to March 1, 1961

Henry V. Jenkins\*

## Jacksonville Stake — organized September 15, 1968

### Jacksonville Stake Renamed Jacksonville Florida East Stake — Spring 1994

L. Blaine Vorwaller Sept. 14, 1968 to April 1978

Robert E. Bone 1978 to 1987

Harry A. Yeargin Nov. 15, 1987 to May 1994

Joel W. Warner 1994 to present

## Florida Stake Renamed Jacksonville Florida West Stake — Spring 1974

William O. Copeland Nov. 1970 to Dec 1976

Robert C. Moody\*

James E. Hill\*

Nelson D. Harris 1991 to present

## Douglas Georgia Stake — October 26, 1975

Roswald Mancil 1975

Ovid O'Neal \*

Howard Ray Heilesen\*

Douglas D. Gilbert 23 Oct 1995 to present

## Gainesville Florida Stake — February 29, 1976

James R. Christinsen \*

Chester E. Tillman\*

Vernie L. Corbett 1988 to 1997

Brent Oscarmiller 1997 to present

## Lake City Florida Stake — March 16, 1986

Ernest Peacock 1986 to 1995

Z. Vincent Smallwood 1995 to present

## Jacksonville Florida North Stake — November 15, 1987

Robert E. Bone 1987 to 1988

Richard M. Padgett, Sr. 1988 to present



# FLORIDA STAKE

JANUARY 19, 1947

Information contributed by Stanley Clyde Johnson of Newberry, Florida, supplemented with additional material found in other recordings pertaining to the history of the Church in this era of time of the Church organization in Florida.

Organization of the Church in the Jacksonville, Florida area

## IN THE BEGINNING

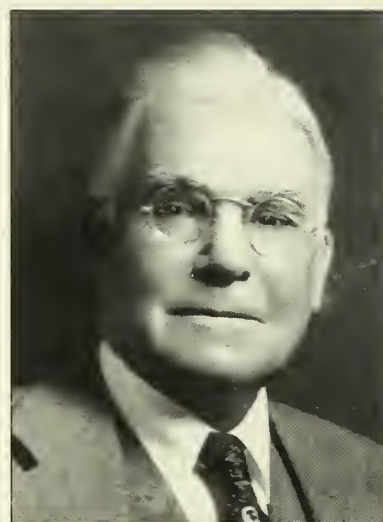
### THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF CLAUDE AND SHORT STREETS

The first building owned by the Church in Jacksonville was constructed. According to accounts in the missionary reports to the Southern States Mission headquarters as reported in *The Elder's Journal*, the missionaries themselves donned working clothes and performed most of the work. Local citizens were quite impressed at the sight of these young men laboring with their hands and preaching when and where opportunity presented itself. With the approval of the Mission President, Ben E. Rich, contributions were solicited from all over the Mission and the response was gratifying. It was in the fall of 1904 that the local Saints and traveling missionaries obtained permission from President Ben. E. Rich to begin plans for a building in Jacksonville. Members of that building committee who signed the letter of solicitation were President Golightly, Elders A.L. McAlister, C.E. Ferrin, Brother Fred Reimer, and Sisters A.G. Watson and W.V. Colby.

The Claude and Short Street building, for so it became known, faced Short Street and looked north. It was frame construction and had high ceilings and a very tall gable style roof. An abundance of windows on both sides, themselves tall and glass-enclosed, provided light. A tower at the northeast corner protruding out from the main structure on the east and north sides formed the base for the steeple or bell tower extending high above the roof and adorned on the top with a lightning rod typical of building construction of that day. This protruding base also housed the lobby entrance to the chapel, and received the six steps rising from ground level. Its furnishings were plain and must not have been wired for electricity for a later issue of *The Elder's Journal* reported the local sisters carpeted the floor and had wiring for electricity installed.

Upon completion, it was reported that the total cost had been just over \$2,000 and was insured for \$1,000. Insurance undoubtedly was to cover costs of rebuilding or damages from mob actions common in the South in those days. On Sunday afternoon, September 2, 1906, the building was dedicated by President Ben E. Rich, President of the Southern States Mission. A general conference had been held starting on the 1st and concluding on the 2nd. President Rich stated it was the best gathering he had attended in Florida as each conference session played to an overflow congregation.

On the day following the dedication, a Priesthood meeting was held in which Elder Charles A. Callis was called to be the President of the Florida Conference succeeding President D.A. Tidwell who was returning home. Elder Callis and his wife Grace had been called to serve a mission together, a thing not uncommon in those days. She was with him and spoke to a women's group on the dedication day.



**Charles A. Callis**

A small building was constructed at the rear of the church some time later. This building faced on Claude Street and was used for Sunday School classes. President Callis' report for the month of October, 1906, announced that a Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association had been organized with Carrie Tilton as President. They probably used this building too. In addition, it was reported in that same issue that the Sunday School had added an intermediate department and was prospering remarkably. This same building would serve as the residence for the superintendent who would build the Park and Copeland building in the 1920s.

*In 1970 Brother James R. Boone, a pioneer member of the Church in the South and a member of the Jacksonville Florida East Stake gave the following statement to me concerning the early Church and Saints in the Springfield area. LMS*

"It was during the early pioneering days of the Church in Florida that a group of Saints living in the Springfield section of Jacksonville decided to build a small chapel in their section of town. The five or so families had been travelling by bus across town to attend meetings in a small LDS chapel at the corner of Claude

and Short Streets. Two of the brethren were builders and they assisted the missionaries living in the area in building the small one-story structure at 1024 East 23rd Street on the property of Brother Charles Zetterower and his wife, Lucy Tilton. The small chapel with its varnished walls and polished floors was occupied for the first time about 1916. Brother Nathan Samuel Nesmith lived across the street with his family, and Sister Smith and Sister Zetterower were responsible for feeding the six to eight missionaries daily during the construction of the chapel which became known as the Ashley Branch.

"The small branch began to grow and converts were adding to the membership. One of the most interesting talks in the branch was given by a visitor named Chief Blue an Indian Chief from South Carolina. He spoke of his people and how much the restoration of the gospel meant to them. He told the Saints that as his people lived the principles of the gospel their skin was becoming lighter. He said his daughter's skin was lighter and newborn babies born to his people who were Church members living the gospel had lighter skin.

"Some years later, the little chapel was blown down during a storm. One of the missionaries, Elder Holman, looked out of the window from Brother Nathan Smith's home and said, 'The Church is falling'. After the storm, the Ashley Branch began attending Church again across town in their former branch on Short Street. Many members could not attend because of the distance and having to walk through wooded areas to get to the bus stop. A few months later, Brothers Zetterower, Jenkins, Russell and Smith built, at their own expense, a small structure on Brother Smith's property, directly across from the storm blown chapel. It was made of rough lumber and nothing fancy like their former building, but the Springfield Saints needed a meeting house in their community. Traveling with small children across town proved too hard on many, so once again they had a chapel, only this time it was known as the Springfield Branch.

"A few years later a beautiful brick chapel was built for the Jacksonville Saints at Park and Copeland Streets in the Riverside area. Once again Saints from all communities met together. The Springfield Saints once again found the transportation problem too much of a hardship for their families to attend all their meetings in the Park and Copeland Street chapel, so Sunday School and other meetings were held in various member's homes. At one time arrangements were made with the Women's Club to rent their building. In 1939, arrangements had to be made to move again. This time the location was in a room located above a whiskey store at 17th and Main Streets. For many years Brother O.H. Hawkins would clean up bottles, etc., before the meet-

ings of the Saints and drive all over the community in his truck picking up families and children for activities and services.

"This location was used by the Springfield Saints until a stucco building at Ninth and Market Streets was purchased from the Lutheran Church for \$7,000, complete with an organ, and the Springfield Saints again had a building to attend their meetings.

## A DREAM FULFILLED

A year before it was decided by the General Authorities of the Church that the first stake of Zion would be organized in Florida with headquarters in Jacksonville, President George Albert Smith suggested that President Callis be appointed to take care of that work. Sister Callis naturally would go with him, but she was taken ill and the time of organizing was deferred, hoping that she would recover and they would be able to go together, but she passed away. It took some time for Brother Callis to get on his feet in possession of himself so as to feel strong enough to undertake that work which he and Brother Harold B. Lee had been appointed to attend to.

He had spent 28 years presiding and laboring as a missionary in the Southern States Mission and the events that followed the creation of his dream, at the age of 82, seemed to many to be almost a premonition.



*The Charles A. Callis Family*

## THE CREATION OF A STAKE IN THE SOUTH

*From the memories of Stanley Clyde Johnson*

This was a dream of Elder Charles A. Callis who served his mission as a young man, along with his wife, in the South. They first reported to Jacksonville, Florida, on May 2, 1906, with two children and on September 3, 1903, he was made President of the Florida Conference. Two years later, in 1908 he was called to be President of the Southern States Mission and served until 1934 in that office for a total of 28 years. In 1933, he



was called to be an Apostle and in that capacity longed to see a stake created in the South.

Elder James R. Boone, a stalwart pioneer of the Church in the South, in Florida, and more especially in Jacksonville, stated in an interview that one of the general authorities came to Jacksonville to organize a stake several years before it was actually done, but decided not to do so saying the stake president was still in the Army. For some years the matter of a stake in the South had been a subject of consideration among the brethren. By 1947, there existed only three stakes east of the Mississippi River and none in the true South. They were New York Stake, the 110th of the Church; Chicago, number 118, and Washington, D.C. number 131 had been created in 1934, 1936, and 1940.

In April of 1937, Elder James R. Boone had been called to be the President of the newly formed Florida District with W.R. Woods and Alvin C. Chace as his



**Organization of Florida Stake January 19, 1947  
Park and Copeland Streets Chapel**

*Apostle Harold B. Lee, left. Apostle Charles Callis, Elder A. O. Jenkins and James R. Boone to right.*

counselors. Southern States Mission President, LeGrand Richards, formed this district, the first time local affairs of the Church were placed in charge of local brethren. Alvin C. Chace would become the first president of the new stake and in later years, a nephew of Elder Woods, Robert C. Moody, would become president of the West Stake following a division of the original Florida Stake.

President Boone recorded in his records that in late 1946 and early 1947 books and records and other materials necessary in a stake organization began to arrive and he knew that something of grave importance was underway. Elder Chace had returned from serving in the War and other leaders were in place, some of whom had had experience in stake organizations elsewhere. The work had grown in Jacksonville and its surrounding cities as far away as Axson in Georgia. The members were ready to test themselves in an official unit of Church administration and the leaders had satisfactorily handled the details of district functions in a mission. President Heber Meeks of the Southern States Mission was agreeable and the stage was set.

In early January of 1947, Elders Charles A. Callis and Harold B. Lee of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles arrived in Jacksonville by train as this was the mode of travel by the brethren then. President Heber Meeks met them and they took possession of the books and materials previously received and began the process of organizing the new stake. During this time, Elder Callis chose to stay in the Park and Copeland Street chapel instead of staying in a hotel or with members. The 82 year-old southern patriarch slept on a cot placed in one of



**Apostle Charles A. Callis presiding  
at organization of First Stake in the South: Florida Stake  
Park and Copeland Streets Chapel.**



**Elder Harold B. Lee  
presiding at podium of  
the organization of  
Florida Stake  
January 19, 1947,  
Park and Copland Streets  
Chapel**

the classrooms on the upper floor of the chapel where, on occasion, missionaries had slept.

On January 18, 1947, an entertainment program was held by the Florida District at the George Washington Hotel in Jacksonville. Some of those on the program were: Prelude: Helen Fryer, Invocation by Stanley W. Julian. Greetings and Highlights of Mormon History in Florida by James R. Boone: Music Quartet: "Kentucky Babe" with William Copeland, George Hill, Earl Starling, Leon Copeland. District male quartet with Gloria Maddock as soloist, "Take Me Home Again, Kathleen". Talk by Ronnie Brannen: How the M.I.A. and Boy Scouts Have Helped to Better My Life. Piano solo by Betty Joe Webb. A play, *The Travelers* consisted of the following: Johnnie Rudd, Marie Shuman,

Marguerite Lowe, Ruth Hill, A.J. Beasley, William R. Stevens, William Berrie, John Morrison, Elsie Starling, William Berrie, Floyd Parker. A trio: Hazel Starling, Jewel Wilford, and Grace Starling sang, "The Sunshine of Your Smile." Closing prayer A.O. Jenkins, Pianist Adaline Chace and Music Director Earl Starling.

On January 19, 1947, Elder Callis saw his long-time desire of the first stake in the South organized when the Saints gathered in the Park and Copeland Street chapel. On the evening of the organization he telegraphed the following message to Church headquarters in Salt Lake City.

"The 163rd stake in Zion, the Florida Stake, was organized today with the chapel on Park and Copeland Streets filled to overflowing. The weather was warm and beautiful.

"There are nearly 3,000 people in the area out of which the new stake was organized, comprising

**Organization of  
Florida Stake  
January 19, 1947,  
Park and Copland Streets  
Chapel**





seven wards and five branches.” Then he listed the names and positions of those called to serve in these latter-days.

Alvin Canova Chace, *Stake President and Chairman Welfare Committee*  
Elmer Coleman Madsen, *First Counselor and Chairman of Melchizedek Priesthood Committee*  
Jacquard Maurice Lindsey, Sr., *Second Counselor*  
George Hamilton Hill, Jr., *Stake Clerk.*

The following eight brethren were installed as members of the original high council and were ordained high priests at the same time:

Archie O. Jenkins: *Chairman of the Aaronic Priesthood*  
Carlos L. Padgett: *Chairman Adult Aaronic Priesthood*  
Ozra H. Hawkins: *Stake Work Director*  
Rudy J. Rudd: *Chairman Ward Teaching Committee*  
George Ira Williams: *Chairman Genealogy Committee*  
Paul K. Knabb  
Murray William Shields  
John L. Albritton

In those days, the stake presidency did not serve also as the presidency of the High Priests Quorum in a stake; therefore, this presidency was formed with these brethren:

James R. Boone, *President High Priests' Quorum*  
Thomas C. Copeland, *First Counselor*  
Otho Starling, *Second Counselor*

Neither was there established a Seventy's Quorum, but Elder Wilford Jordan was ordained a Seventy and installed as the President of the Stake Mission. One Elders' Quorum was set up with:

Joseph S. Copeland, *President of Elders' Quorum*  
William F. Berrie, *First Counselor*  
Forest Nathan Smith, *Second Counselor*

The Auxiliary organizations of the stake were effected with the leaders as shown:

Sunday School: Sherwood S. Boxx, *Superintendent*  
Carlos Starling, *First Assistant*  
William J. Brannen, *Second Assistant*

Relief Society: Josephine Jenkins, *President*  
Minnie Dills, *First Counselor*  
Marie Shuman, *Second Counselor*

Y.M.M.I.A.

Thomas A. Hill, *President*  
Cassidy Chesser, *First Counselor*  
Earl P. Geilman, *Second Counselor*

Y.W.M.I.A.

Alzada Beasley Chace, *President*  
Mary Lou Strickland, *First Counselor*  
Estelle Davis, *Second Counselor*

PRIMARY

Ruth Lucille Copeland, *President*  
Ruth Boone, *First Counselor*  
Marian H. Madsen, *Second Counselor*

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Lawrence J. Maddock

*Some board members of the auxiliaries were installed at this organization conference but many were left vacant to be called by the newly appointed officers. There also occurred some events that occurred during this time which are held sacred to the organization of this stake.*

## WARD BISHOPRICS/BRANCHES

### AXSON WARD

Bishop: Jesse Williams  
1st Counselor: Aaron Mizel  
2nd Counselor: Parley P. Davis

### WAYCROSS WARD

Bishop: Clifford Jordan  
1st Counselor: Ivan T. Harris  
2nd. Counselor: Thomas J. Collins

### JACKSONVILLE WARD

Bishop: Stanley W. Julian  
1st Counselor: Johnie E. Rudd  
2nd Counselor: Julian Grindstaff

### LAKE CITY WARD

Bishop: Luther T. Thomas  
1st Counselor: Johnnie Milton  
2nd Counselor: Colton Voyd Cooper

### PALATKA WARD

Bishop: Woodrow W. Tilton  
1st Counselor: Alonzo McGrath  
2nd Counselor: Raymond Tucker

### SPRINGFIELD WARD

Bishop: John T. Morrison  
1st Counselor: George Clifton Johnson  
2nd Counselor: James V. Kirkland

## WESCONNETT WARD

Bishop: William O. Copeland

1st Counselor: James N. Copeland

2nd Counselor: Floyd C. Parker

## SANDERSON BRANCH

President: George O'Neal Kirkland

1st Counselor: Albert Kirkland

2nd. Counselor: Earl Owen Burnett

## GAINESVILLE BRANCH

President: Don N. Willis

1st Counselor: Jackie Lampros

2nd. Counselor: Robert M. Byrd

## OAK GROVE DEPENDENT BRANCH

## ST. AUGUSTINE DEPENDENT BRANCH

## DOCTORS INLET DEPENDENT BRANCH

On Tuesday, Jan 21, just two days after the organization of the Florida Stake, Elder Archie O. Jenkins asked Elder Callis if he might like to ride downtown in Jacksonville and see his jewelry store. Elder Callis replied that he would, and they drove by the Church building located at Park and Copeland on their way. As they approached the section of Five Points, Elder Callis looked at Elder Jenkins and said, 'Archie, last night Grace.....' and slumped over in the car seat. (Grace, his wife, has passed a way a few months before). The hospital was only a block or so away, but by the time they arrived there, Elder Callis was dead from a heart attack.

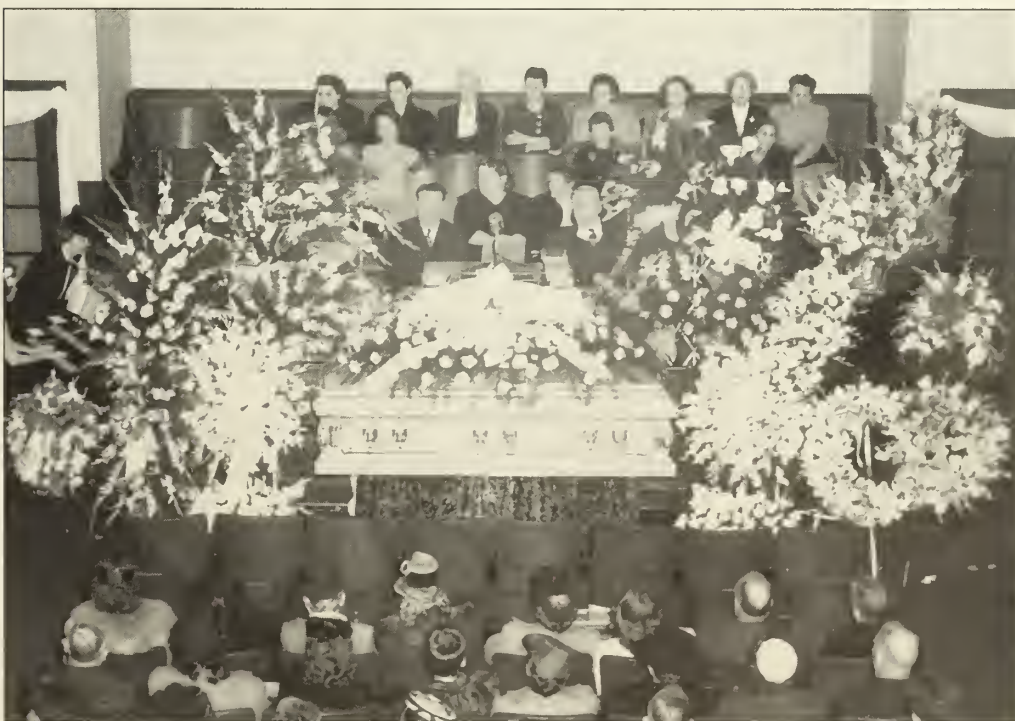
The people who filled the Park and Copeland Street chapel to overflowing on Thursday, January 23rd to pay their last respects to him were filled with grief. Just a few days before they had felt the thrill of assuming the reins of a brand new stake. They gazed somberly at the same pulpit, remembering that four days earlier Elder Callis had stood there to created their stake. They were stunned and dazed as speaker after speaker eulogized and paid their respects to this great man who had given so much of his life to the people of his beloved South. But the mantle of greatness descended upon the occasion bequeathing the hallowed spirit of great expectations from this people.....his people.... who now constituted the first stake of the Church in the South in this dispensation.

Pallbearers included Elders James R. Boone, Carlos Padgett, O.H. Hawkins, A.O.

Jenkins, Paul K. Knabb, Rudy Rudd, Ira Williams and J.M. Lindsey.

His body, accompanied by Elder Harold B. Lee, was sent by train to Salt Lake City for burial.

Elder Callis was born in Dublin, Ireland in May 1865. He was a member of the Utah and Florida Bar Associations. He had served as president of the Southern States Mission for 27 years before he was called and ordained October 12, 1933 and sustained as a member of the Council of Twelve in 1934. He was survived by five daughters: Laura Horne, Josephine Spilsbury, Kathleen Spencer, Grace Summerhays and Pearl Callis. One son Paul Callis, and 17 grandchildren. (Data from Jan 22, 1947 Florida Times Union).



*Funeral Service for Charles A. Callis, January 23, 1947,  
at Park and Copeland Streets Chapel.*

## THE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM THE FUNERAL SERVICES OF ELDER CHARLES A. CALLIS.

Elder Harold B. Lee: "To him, there in Jacksonville, as he told me— and I think with somewhat the same feeling that the Prophet Joseph must have had regarding Nauvoo— that there was the center of one of the loveliest countries on the face of the earth, and there he was among the loveliest people that lived. I notice over here to my right there is a beautiful floral piece that represents the map of the state of Florida, with the word 'Florida' spelled out across the floral piece. I want to say to you



today, that I witnessed the tenderness with which they laid this great leader of theirs away. As I see this floral piece here today, and I know what is behind it, I can say to you in all truthfulness that down in Florida there is only one heart today, and that heart is very sad at the passing of their beloved leader.”

**The First Presidency:** “He loved humanity, he was patient with its faults, he glorified in its virtues. He was a friend of the unfortunate; he was an encouraging helper to all who desired to live the principles of the gospel. He was a man of great faith; his testimony was unclouded by doubt. Those who knew him best loved him most.”

**President George F. Richard:** “Before going he said to one of our office help: ‘This,’ referring to the work he was about to do in the Southern States, ‘is the crowning work of my life.’”

**President George Albert Smith:** “I am grateful that he was able to organize a stake in that lovely part of the world. I am hoping now that the people who are members of that stake will have in mind that it is their opportunity to demonstrate their gratitude to God for the Gospel and for its privileges and to demonstrate to Charles A. Callis that they did appreciate him and they still love him.”

**The Florida Stake Presidency:** “His mission started and ended in Jacksonville, Florida; we are grateful for the privilege of eulogizing his life among the people whom he loved. The service held here was a beautiful tribute to a great man of God, and his passing in our midst has sanctified our stake. Alvin C. Chace, E. Coleman Madsen, Jacquard M. Lindsey

## ONWARD, EVER ONWARD.

On Jan 3, 1955, Elder Henry D. Moyle officiated at a special groundbreaking in Jacksonville. A large gathering of the Saints enjoyed the spiritual stimulation and the blessings promised the third and fourth generation of those those who would participate in the building and completion of the Stake Tabernacle located on Hendricks Avenue on the southside of town.

The Florida Stake Tabernacle was built for approximately \$248,000.00 with more than 14,000 hours donated. The beautiful edifice, as it stood completed, furnished with all its accessories, was valued at the time at nearly \$400,000.00.



**Jacksonville Florida East Stake House  
4087 Hendricks Avenue (on the Southside)**

*I feel that the Giver of the Holy Ghost has revealed unto me the divinity of the Book of Mormon and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. The Elders have administered to me twice, doing me more good than medical aid. I am thankful to my Heavenly Father that I live in this last dispensation.*

*Maggie Daniel*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*I am glad to know that I belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and I know that it is true, and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.*

*Lizzie Williams*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*I am a member of the Church of Christ and am glad of it. We have one of the oldest Sunday schools in Florida. I can say to all Saints, you can learn the ways of the Lord at Sunday school. Send your children. I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, who shed his blood as a testimony of the gospel.*

*A.J. Knight*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*

*I know the gospel I have embraced is true. It is the power of God unto salvation. I have not space to tell why I know it is true. I ask the blessings of the Lord on Saints and friends.*

*J.H. Knight*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908*



# RELIEF SOCIETY SCRAPBOOK

*Relief Society Presidency,  
Jacksonville Branch,  
Jacksonville, Florida 1910*

*Florence Terrell Harvin, President, center.  
Margaret Greene Hill, 1st Counselor, left.  
Ella Gertrude Hill Roberts, 2nd Counselor, right.*



*Relief Society Sisters,  
May 24, 1943, Occasion Unknown*

*First Row, Left to right: Adaline Canova Chace, Shermar Rudd, Eunice Rochester, Nellie Dyal and unknown person.  
Second row, left to right: Effie Meeks, Josephine Jenkins, Elsie Starling, Marie Sellers, Rudy Rudd  
Back row: Edna Kirkland and Thelma Bonhur.*







**Relief Society Jacksonville East Play before 1946  
'Don't Count Your Chickens'**

Left to right: Micky McRae, Josephine Jenkins, Verdie Kinard, Ruth Hill, Ruby Copeland, Martha Rudd, Edith O'Neal, Marion Henson, Jr., Alice Brimhall, Elsie Starling, Ethel Atkinson, Rosalee Brooks (?), Director.

**Visiting Teaching Convention, circa 1940's**

Left to right: Alberta Chester – 5th, Elois Hand – 5th, Ora Mae Lang – 3rd, Sister Tilton – Palatka, (?) Williams – 2nd, Vella Valentine Tilton, and Garnetta Valentine Padgett – Palatka, Micky McRae – 3rd, Sister Bedenbaugh – Lake City, Sister Folsom – Palatka, Edna Stone – 3rd, Ruby Cersey – 5th, Evelyn Green – 3rd, Cleo Anderson – 2nd, Susan Ann Warren – 3rd, Alice Cunningham (Carter) Hollton – 5th, Sister Shields – Gainesville, Minnie Dills – 5th, Jean Turner – 3rd, Viola Daniels and Vera Williams – 3rd, Catherine Ford and Pearl Philen – 3rd, Sister Northcutt – 3rd.





First Florida Stake  
Relief Society President  
**Josephine Jenkins**  
January 19, 1947  
to March 6, 1955



Second Florida Stake  
Relief Society President  
**Effie Meeks**  
March 6, 1955  
to November 25, 1956



San Mateo Branch  
Relief Society  
Centennial Celebration,  
March 1942

Left to right:  
Vella Valentine Tilton  
Evelyn Solana Tilton  
Phyllis Anderson Ladd  
Lizzie Tilton Turner  
Josephine Baum  
Mattie Tilton Hanna  
Bessie Turner Hawkins  
Nellie Tilton Haynes



Third Florida Stake  
Relief Society President  
**Vella Valentine Tilton**  
November 25, 1956  
to September 21, 1958



Fourth Florida Stake  
Relief Society President  
**Vida Bennett**  
September 21, 1958  
to October 15, 1961



# PIONEER DAY CELEBRATIONS IN THE SOUTH

San Mateo  
By Vella Valentine Tilton

From 1933 to 1942 Pioneer Day Celebrations were held every 24th of July in San Mateo. Entertainment during the first of these in 1933 consisted of wild steer riding by the young men in the front yard of Ed and Bessie Hawkins. No chutes or pens were had, so some of the men would hold the steer until the rider mounted and was ready. When released the steer would buck and jump, many times dumping the rider into the sand and sandspurs. Foot races were enjoyed as well as a basket dinner spread under the oak trees. About 1936 William F. Tilton and his son, Woody, assisted by other sons built bleachers east of the dipping vat, making it more comfortable for the spectators. Chutes and pens were built making it easier to handle the animals. Usually Willie Tilton, his sons, S.J. and Bill, would go on horseback to gather steers for riding, calves for roping and wild cows for the hilarious event of wild cow milking. These facilities were used during the Pioneer Day Celebrations for the next few years. After the U.S. went to war when the



***San Mateo Florida Branch Chapel,  
San Mateo, Florida***

Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in Dec. 1941, the celebrations were no longer held in San Mateo. Gas was rationed making it difficult to travel and many of the young men were in the service of their country. Many special memories were built through the happy years when these gatherings were held in San Mateo. Fellowship strengthened friendships among the members. Woodrow W. (Woody) Tilton was the District Councilman assigned to oversee the YM and YW MIA activities and as such was the driving force behind these celebrations along with his father and brothers.



***1938 Relief Society Pioneer Celebration  
(persons unknown)***



# LDS RELIEF SOCIETY CHOIR



**Relief Society Choir Organization of Florida Stake  
January 19, 1947 at the Park and Copeland Streets Chapel**

*Pearl Cope, Director, facing choir.*

*Back row: Nancy Sellers, Idell Webb, Millie Dills, Unknown, Ruth Hill, Jessie Croft, Unknown, Inez Starling, Jewell Hill.*

*Front row: Marguerite Manning, Nora Copeland, Laura Demerit*

*Bretheren on Stand, far left: Harold B. Lee, Heber Meeks; to right: Charles A. Callis and James R. Boone.*



**Jacksonville LDS Relief Society Choir  
July 17, 1917**

*Seated, left to right: Sister Tolman (missionary), Mabel Roberts Rast (organist), Nellie Hill (director), Elise Harvin, Janie Hill*

*Second row: Alice Hill Harris, Edna Hill Grindstaff, Madge Harris, Ollie May Berel, Gertrude Berel, Marie Roberts*

*Third row: Tommy Copeland, Elder Tolman (missionary), Unidentified, Rudy Rudd, Nancy Copeland Sellers*





**Florida Stake Relief Society Singing Conference  
Jacksonville Florida, 1948**

First row, left to right: Ida Starling, Marie Shuman, Josephine Jenkins, Minnie Dills, Ollie Mae Avery, Nancy Sellers, Adaline Chace.

Second row, left to right: Nettie Strickland, Renie Tompkins, Susan Ann Warren, Gertrude Jordan, Nola Friar, Iris Ward, unknown, unknown.

Third row, left to right: unknown, Joyce Rudd, Roxie Crolley, unknown, Corene Wright, Nellie Dyal, ? Suber, Marguerite Hill.

Fourth row, left to right: Evelyn Morrison, Lucy Zetterower, Mary Ethel Morrison, Ruby Webb, Betty Jo Webb, June Kinard, Jean Owens, Ethel Atkinson.

Fifth row, left to right: Corinne Bethea, Amy Willis, Martha 'Mattie' Hanna, Nellie Haynes, Lizzie Turner.

Sixth row, left to right: unknown, Amy Willis, Vella Tilton, Bessie Hawkins, Edith Roberson, Cassie Bowles, Elsie Starling, Mary Stephens.

Seventh row, left to right: all unknown.

Eighth row, left to right: Ruth Stafford, Johnnie Ruth Johnson, Mary Hill, Ruby Copeland, rest unknown.

Ninth row, left to right: Sarah Ann Johnson, Louise Kirkland, Martha Rudd, Edith Dorough, unknown, June Stacey, Verdie Kinard.

Tenth row, left to right: ? Croft, Pearl Cope, Inez Starling, Eunice Tucker, June Swanson, rest unknown.

# GOLD AND GREEN BALLS

Gold and Green Balls have been held in the Jacksonville area since the 1930s.

When President LeGrand Richards became the Southern States Mission President (1934-1937) he recognized the need for cultural development among the youth in the south. In his autobiography, *Beloved Apostle*, by Lucile C. Tate, the subject of dancing was addressed on page 169-170 as thus, "It was the area of MIA that some of the most drastic changes were necessary. A total break with tradition was required. When the president told the people that they were going to teach the young people to dance, some of the brethren said it could not be done in the South, for if they let them dance in Church buildings the local inhabitants would burn the buildings down. To this he said, "Well, if they do, we will build them up again, only we will make them larger so more can dance in them." (One chapel was burned down — whether from

arson was not established; but another larger one was built to replace it, and successful dances were held there.)

"Emotions ran high. One good brother in west Florida said, "President Richards, if you let them dance in our building I will have my father's body removed from the cemetery next to the Church property." As the Lord's representative in the mission's program for the

## June 3, 1939 Gold and Green Ball

Left to right: Alta Frier, Werdua Henderson, Marion Hinson, (?) West Florida Queen, Myrtle Starling, Flower Girl or Crown Bearer, Lucile Webb, Florida Queen, (?) South Florida Queen, Naomi Frier, Christine Henderson and Alzada Beasley.



## Florida District Gold and Green Ball

Left to right: Virginia Anderson, Jacksonville, Virginia Tilton, San Mateo, Queen Ardis Rast, Jacksonville, Jean Folsom, Palatka.





**Gold and Green Ball held at Park and Copeland Streets on May 18, 1935**

Left to right: 1st person unknown, with Hazel Wilford, Alvin Chace and Vella Valentine, Zuliene Jordan, Queen, the Queen's escort unknown, Hilda Ferreira and John Blocker, Eunice Black and Dyruff Starling.

**Gold and Green Ball held at Park and Copeland Streets on May 18, 1935**

**Couples Demonstrating Different Dance Positions in MIA Dances**

Left to right: Ruth Croft with Orson Croft, Vella Valentine with Alvin Chace, Robbie (?) with Russell Zetterower, Elder Andy Cooley, Queen Zuliene Jordan, Elder Black, Eunice (?) with Dyruff Starling, Hazel Wilford with Billy Copeland, Corinne Jordan with Lawrence Copeland.





youth, President Richards told the man not to worry, they would not force him to dance in that building; but he added, "Before I leave this mission you will be dancing in it yourself and enjoying it." And he was."

A strict dress code was enforced for the youth to foster a sense of refinement, and self-worth so that even country girls, many of whom worked barefoot in cotton fields, could hold out higher standards. Adults were encouraged to do the same. President Richards taught that the leaders and the parents would have to set the example. He organized and held leadership training seminars and meetings for adults and was prone to release leaders who, in a reasonable time, did not comply with Church standards.

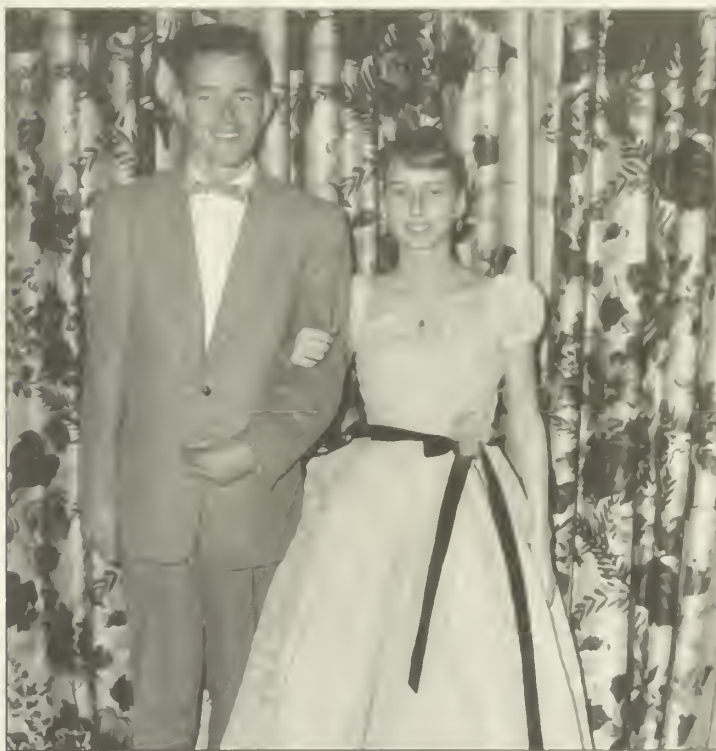
The Gold and Green Balls became the social event of the year for southern Latter-Day Saints, as well as programs in the MIA auxiliary that helped the youth of the Church develop social skills. Vella Valentine Tilton, of San Mateo, remembers those days well.

"While mission president, Le Grand Richards, encouraged dancing among the young people, many happy evenings were enjoyed during and after MIA. We were taught the waltz, fox trot, tango and 'mixers'. These dances were demonstrated at the annual Gold and Green Balls that were held in the branches, districts and missions. To the beat of the music, the couples circled the dance floor, doing the same steps at the same time. It was a beautiful sight with the young ladies in their lovely evening gowns. Sometime during the evening the announcer would tell everyone to choose their partner for the grand march. The group would follow the Grand Marshal through the patterns of one abreast, two abreast, three abreast, criss-cross and over and under. It

was great fun. Also it was a tradition that the last dance of the evening was to the melody, Good Night Ladies."

Sister Tilton explained that dance lessons came from Salt Lake City and the missionaries helped local leaders figure out the ballroom dance steps.

Although Gold and Green Balls are still held annually throughout many stakes in the south, most are not held with the same finesse as were the grandeur of those earlier events.



**Gold and Green Ball 1954, Jacksonville  
Park and Copeland Streets Chapel**  
Edward 'Buddy' Murray and Sabina James.

#### **Grand March**

Front line, left to right: unkn., unkn., Cassady Chesser,

unkn., Bernard Boxx,  
Eloise Rudd, Bill Wilford.

2nd Line: Claire  
DeLoach, A.J. Beasley,  
Jewell James, Lola Boxx,  
Sheward Boxx.

3rd Line: Norma Ray,  
unkn., Earl Kinard,  
Madeline Dickey,  
Chester Boxx, Mercedes  
Dickey, unkn.

4th Line, far right: Jack  
Lindsey, Marion and  
Coley Madsen, Pearl and  
A.L. Ferreira.

Others in group: Nancy  
Sellers, Carlos Starling,  
Jack Lindsey, Alzada and  
Alvin Chace, Doris and  
Stanley Julian.

Sitting on sideline by  
wall: Elsie Starling,  
Idella Wilford, Ruth  
Atkinson.





# *Salt of the South*

## *The LDS Trail Blazers*

*LaViece Moore-Fraser Smallwood*



*Rlonk 97*





VIRGINIA DERBYSHIRE &  
WILFORD WATTS JORDAN



DIANNA GREENE &  
GEORGE PAUL CANOVA



MARGARET GREENE &  
THADDEUS HILL



ALZADA BEASLEY &  
ALVIN CANOVA CHACE



EMMA KERCE &  
JOHN JACKSON BLACKWELDER



EVELYN MARY SOLANA &  
WILLIAM FRITCHIFF TILTON



EMALINE MACONSON &  
PERRY VOYLES



# LDS PIONEERS

*The following sketches of early LDS Saints in Florida first appeared in newsletters published by Lynn Norris for the old Jacksonville Ward at Park and Copeland Streets during the years 1973-74 under the direction of Bishop Ron Vonk.*

*They have been contributed for publication in this book by Lawrence Maddock and his sister, LaVonne Norris, wife of the late Lynn Norris, currently living in Pensacola, Florida. The interviews are in first person, spelling and expressions left exactly as found in the newsletters.*

Newsletter Dec 1973

## GEORGE IRA WILLIAMS

I was born 80 years ago, October 4, 1893, in Pinemount, Suwannee County, Florida. My parents were Isaac Fulton Williams and Jessie Caldonia Shelfer. I later lived in Padlock, and then beginning in 1899 we moved to McAlpine, Suwannee County, Florida. I was a member of a large family, three brothers and four sisters are still living. I completed the fifth grade of the county schools.

In 1912 I went to Deerfield, Florida, to work as a telegraph operator. Later that year I taught telegraph school in Live Oak for six weeks. Then I went to St. Petersburg to work for a short period. The last day of 1912 I moved to Jacksonville, Florida.

In Jacksonville, I had various railroad jobs until my retirement. I worked first for the Jax Terminal Company and while on this job, I met and married Sallie Green Walker. We were married March 11, 1917, at Jacksonville. About a year later, on March 15, 1918, I was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

After joining the Church, I did not take an active part for several years. I moved about quite a bit in my railroad work. In the spring of 1932, Brother Giles B. Melvin asked me to do home teaching with him. I enjoyed this calling very much and have enjoyed working regularly in Church assignments ever since. I received the Aaronic Priesthood Feb. 14, 1932, ordained by Archie O. Jenkins. Later that year, on Dec. 4, I was ordained an Elder.

I was called to serve as a scoutmaster, and then as clerk in the Elders Quorum. Brother Giles B. Melvin in Panama Park Branch (out of Buffalo) called me to serve as his 1st counselor in the Branch Presidency. Then I was active on various assignments in Florida. In 1934, I was called as a District High Councilman and was assigned to Oak Grove Branch for a period of 18 very

enjoyable months. Then I was assigned to the Jacksonville Branch. I served a short term mission in Florida for three months beginning November 7, 1943, serving in Cross City, then Orlando and then in the Florida District. From August 4, 1938, until August 25, 1940, I was missionary superintendent of the Jacksonville Branch. Only a very few brethren in Jacksonville held the Melchizedek Priesthood at that time. I had the privilege of baptizing some members who are still engaged actively in various church callings.

I served as district high councilman until January 19, 1947, when the Florida Stake was organized. At that time, I was called as a high councilman in the Florida Stake. I was ordained a high priest on that day by Apostle Charles A. Callis.

On November 18, 1951, I was ordained a Bishop by Joseph Fielding Smith to serve as Bishop of the Jacksonville Second Ward at Park and Copeland Streets. When the new Stake Center was completed on Hendricks Avenue, I was sustained as Bishop of the Jacksonville Fifth Ward for a period.

In June 1957, Bishop James E. Hill called me to serve with him as a counselor in the Bishopric of the Jacksonville Fifth Ward. Later I served as Bishop of Jacksonville Third Ward, although I did not live within that Ward's boundary. This calling proved to be a great challenge to me and a great blessing, an assignment I enjoyed very much.

In March 1963, I was released as Bishop of the Jacksonville Third Ward and was sustained again as Bishop of the Jacksonville Fifth Ward at Park and Copeland Streets and served again for several years.

I have enjoyed serving the Lord in whatever calling has come to me. I have a strong testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have always enjoyed home teaching. My advice has always been for people to be active in the Church and to serve the Lord.

NOTE; BISHOP WILLIAMS PASSED AWAY ON NOVEMBER 9 PRIOR TO HIS STORY APPEARING IN THE NEWS LETTER IN DECEMBER. FUNERAL SERVICES WERE HELD ON NOV. 12TH. THE FOLLOWING APPEARED IN THE NEWSLETTER.

"He truly loved the Lord, and did his best always to keep the Lord's commandments, and to serve his fellow men. He was always so dependable, and as our Bishop so willing to do more than was expected of him." Sister Edith Bake expressed the feelings of many of us.

"We will miss him, his white hair and bright smile. His spirit is special; His wisdom was wise. God has called him home to be with family and friends. We will miss him; We will miss him; the ones who loved him, but not half as much as dear Sally and family."

## EMILY CORENE BETHEA

I was born in Highland, Union County, Florida, September 29, 1908. My parents were Calhoun and Annie Griffis Jordan. Mother was from Union County and my father's family moved there when father was a boy. My parents had 12 children. I was the oldest. We lived in and around Lake Butler, Florida, until I was eight years old when we moved to Levy County, Florida.

My dad made the move to Levy County to work for Cummer Cypress Company. The company operated a small camp at Fowlers Bluff. We lived at this camp for six years. It was not a regular town; there was no post office and no store, only the company's commissary. We had living quarters on the bank of the Suwannee River. Our house faced the river.

While living at Fowlers Bluff, my mother and dad joined the Church. They were taught the gospel by two traveling missionaries. However, my paternal grandparents joined the Church much earlier in 1892; they joined in Union County and attended Church at the Oak Grove Chapel. At Fowlers Bluff there was, of course, no church for us to attend. I was baptized when I was age 12 in a creek back of the Oak Grove Chapel while visiting my grandmother with my family. We moved with the Cummer Cypress Company Camp from Fowlers Bluff to Otter Creek, also in Levy County, a small town about 15 miles distant.

While living in Levy County, we attended Church only at cottage meetings held by the traveling Elders in our home. My mother taught her children the gospel. I remember her strong testimony. One time in Otter Creek, a minister was running a revival and nearly all the children in town were joining his church and we also wanted to join. The minister came to our home to get permission for us children to join his church. My mother said, "Don't you touch my children. You don't have the authority to baptize. We belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." I am thankful for my parents' testimony; through their testimony, I gained a testimony of my own.

While in Levy County, our family visited Jacksonville occasionally. And we came to Jacksonville for the dedication of the chapel on Park and Copeland Streets. We moved to Jacksonville on March 28, 1928, realizing that there was much greater opportunity for jobs, schooling and church participation.

After moving to Jacksonville, I worked eight years at Jacksonville Ginter Box Company. I stopped working when I married John Harley Bethea on November 27, 1935. He joined the Church 17 years later. We have

four children. Our two sons served as missionaries in South America, one in Brazil and one in Uruguay. All of our children have attended Brigham Young University. Two of them graduated, one is a teacher and the other an attorney.

I have received many blessings and much happiness being able to serve in various church assignments. In my earlier years in Jacksonville I taught children in Sunday School. When my first child started Primary I was called to serve in the Primary as a teacher and as a counselor and served continually for about 15 years, until my youngest child graduated. Since then I have served in the RS in different callings, including a calling as President for an 11 year period.

When my first child reached college age, I realized we needed additional income to supplement my husband's salary if our children were to go on missions and to college. So I spent a year in nursing school and obtained a license as an L.P.N., then I worked as a nurse for 15 years at Riverside Hospital.

Living the gospel has made my life and family happy. My dad is now 89 years old. Mother died 20 years ago, but my dad gave us a good stepmother. It is nice to live in the same Ward with them. The gospel is just a way of life for me. I am thankful for my testimony and for a good family.

Newsletter Nov. 1973

## JOHN HARLEY BETHEA

I was born in Lake City, Columbia County, Florida, May 8, 1907, to the Reverend William Parker Bethea, Sr. and Jessie Corine Kerby Bethea.

My father was a farmer in addition to serving as a Baptist minister. I recall many times while I was growing up that I travelled with my father on Sunday when he went to preach at the old Baptist Church in Lulu, Florida, a church he pastored for several years. The trips at that time were made by horse and buggy. Baptist country preachers were not paid money for their services in those days; father was paid with such things as bacon, syrup, potatoes, meal, and flour.

At the age of 17, I came to Jacksonville and began employment with the Seaboard Air Line Railroad Company. Several years later while riding the streetcar to and from work, I met a nice, friendly girl. Her name was Corine Jordan. At this time it did not cross my mind that she was to become my wife in a few months.

When I asked Corine to marry me, I promised her that if she would marry me I would agree for our children to be brought up in the Mormon Church, and if



and when I believed in its teachings, I would become a member. We were married in the Mormon Chapel at Park and Copeland Streets.

Seventeen years after our marriage, Corine's sister Zulienne moved to Compton, California. We decided we would take a trip to California to visit her. On our way to California, we stopped over in Salt Lake City. We took a tour of Temple Square and enjoyed visiting the tabernacle and the Temple grounds. After completing the tour, I had a desire to know more about the Church.

After Corine and I arrived back home, I was told of a cottage meeting being conducted by a younger Elder, Bruce White, who had just returned to Jacksonville after serving a mission. Bro. White, taught me the gospel while attending the meetings he conducted. Then Brother White baptized me in the font in the basement of the chapel at Park and Copeland Streets and confirmed me a member of the Church. I am, of course, grateful to Brother Bruce White. I shall always be very grateful to my dear wife, Corine. Had it not been for her and her exemplary life, I might not be a member of the Mormon Church today. And I am thankful for our four children and 13 grandchildren and their activities in the Church.

In June 1972, I retired after working 47 years with the railroad.

Newsletter Jan 1974

## CALHOUN JORDAN

I was born January 22, 1885, at the little town of Providence, Bradford County, Florida. My parents were John Matthew Jordan and Margaret Matilda Brown. They were baptized in 1892 and attended church at the Oak Grove Chapel.

When I was a child, my parents moved to Alachua County, Florida, to homestead some property. Later they traded this property for some property in Bradford County and moved back there. My parents had five children, four sons and a daughter. I was the oldest. Father died in 1899 when I was age 14. About three years later my mother married Madison Dennison. Two additional children, boys, were born of this marriage.

For awhile after mother remarried, I left home and lived with a family named Parker at Raiford, Florida. I worked for a lumber company which made shingles. Here I met Annie Omega Griffis; we were married on January 17, 1907. Nine years later I took a job with Cummer Cyprus Company and we moved to Fowlers Bluff, a camp in Levy County on the banks of the lovely Suwannee River. I worked for this company in Levy

County for many years.

In 1919, my wife and I joined the Church. We were baptized in the Suwannee River by the travelling missionaries. We had twelve children, seven daughters and five sons. Four of the children died when they were babies, three sons and one daughter. One of the two sons that lived, died following an automobile accident in Jacksonville when he was about age 50.

In Levy County, we attended Church meetings only at cottage meetings in our home when the travelling Elders would come. When my son that is still living was born, the missionaries came to our home and wanted to bless him. We agreed. We had not chosen a name for him, so one of the missionaries, Wilford Watts, suggested we name our son after him, so we named him Wilford Watts Jordan. As part of the blessing, the missionary said, 'Thou shalt go on a mission.' My son, Wilford, later served a two-year mission in Alabama, and has continued to be enthusiastic about missionary work over the years baptizing a substantial number of converts. One of my daughters, now Mrs. Vernie Mae Martin, also served a mission in South Carolina.

In May 1928 we moved from Levy County to Jacksonville, Florida. I began working for the A&P Tea Company at the company's grocery warehouse. I continued with them until I retired at age 72. In Jacksonville I served as Sunday School Superintendent for a while and as a home missionary with three companions Rudy Rudd, Giles Melvin and Otho Starling.

My wife and I were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple on September 11, 1947. We had a happy marriage. She loved the gospel and had a strong desire to have her children live the gospel. She was diligent in Relief Society work. She passed away Sept. 4, 1954. On February 18, 1964, I married Blanche Barker Sheffield. We enjoy attending Church meetings and activities. I feel fortunate to be able to be active at my age. I will be age 89 this month. The gospel is a perfect way of life.

Newsletter Jan 1974

## BLANCHE BARKER JORDAN

I was born on Feb 4, 1895, near the little town of Mayo, Lafayette County, Florida. My parents were John Moses Barker and Dacy Rosetta Padgett. Father was also born in Lafayette County. Mother was born in Fargo, Eccles Co., Georgia, and was a cousin of Carlos Padgett.

I had never heard of the Mormon Church until I was 14 years old, when my mother sent me to borrow some newspapers from the wife of the man my father was farming with. Among the papers received was a copy of

the Mormon publication, *Liahona*. I read the *Liahona* through that day and told mother I had found the most beautiful religion. Two weeks later, two missionaries came to visit the family from whom I got the newspapers. They held a meeting in an old school house. Mother and I attended. Two weeks later, on August 24, 1909, I was baptized. Father was also baptized that day. He had never joined any church before. I knew the Church was true. Mother was baptized shortly afterwards on September 2, 1909. I was baptized in the Econfenia River by Elder James A. Jardine. He gave me a Book of Mormon, which I still have. (Strange as it may seem, the man I was to later marry was baptized the same day at the same place that I was.)

My father had smoked a pipe which he gave up. And I remember he stopped drinking coffee by asking mother to give him a cup of hot water. Mother never drank coffee. Some of my brothers and sisters drank coffee and used snuff but I never took up these habits.

On July 9, 1915, I married a member of the Church, James Bryant Sheffield. We lived far out into the country, 21 miles from Perry, Florida. There was no Sunday School to attend. The Elders came about twice a year. They stayed at our home, which they called headquarters and held cottage meetings. They always walked to our home and carried a suitcase full of books. They said if they walked steadily they could walk the 21 miles in five hours. Generally, the people were very hostile toward them and did not take them in. I remember one time when they came they had lived for four days on fruit cake one of them had received from home. They had been sleeping on the ground each night and drinking only water from ponds by the roadside. During World War I we never saw any Elders for three years.

We had four children, three daughters and one son. We had each child blessed, and we taught them the gospel. They were baptized when reaching eight years of age. I am proud of what we taught them and wish we could have done more. They all married out of the Church, but I am pleased that all of my children's spouses have joined the Church but one, and I expect him to be baptized soon.

My husband passed away August 15, 1944. I had always wanted to go to the temple and to be a missionary. Both have been accomplished. I have served as a Stake missionary in Florida and also a missionary in Texas while living in a branch in the Gulf States mission. I have been to different temples many times. I also had the privilege of going to the dedication of the Los Angeles Temple, taking two friends through it while it was open to the public.

I wish to mention one special experience. When my youngest daughter was 13 months old she was very ill; a

fever never left her for three weeks. Her tonsils were badly swollen and she could not take nourishment. Her doctors said she could not live. I wrote President Charles A. Callis in Atlanta, 300 miles away, requesting missionaries to administer to her. He wrote back that there were no missionaries in the area but he and his counselors would hold prayer the following Saturday at 8 p.m. I watch the clock and at 8 o'clock laid the baby on the bed. She soon began to perspire greatly. I could actually see the swelling leave her little feet. By twelve o'clock the swelling was all gone from her body and she began taking nourishment. Today, she is the mother of two daughters both married in the temple. I know she was healed through prayer by the priesthood.

I married Calhoun Jordan on Feb 18, 1964. We have enjoyed living in the Jacksonville Ward. I know this gospel is true and hope I can remain faithful to the end.

Newsletter Dec 1973

## JOSEPH HENDERSON SNOW

I was born April 17, 1878, about 11 miles from Milledgeville, Ga. My father was James Washington Snow. Mother's name was Tammy Ann Weaver. She died when I was about six weeks-old. I was reared on a country farm and I lived there until I was about 45 years old. I moved to Jacksonville when I was about 60 years old.

I married Ophelia Calhoun on October 4, 1904, at Terrytown, Ga. We had three daughters and four sons. We both joined the Church at Brunswick, Ga. where we lived for about ten years. Before I had been a missionary Baptist for about nine years. In Brunswick we were living not far from a Mormon family and the wife told my wife about the Church. Some Elders came and held some cottage meetings in the area, and I attended. They gave us some tracts and I liked what I read. A few months later the Elders came back and I told them to hold cottage meetings in our home. I liked the idea that there was no paid minister. My wife and her sister first requested baptism, but we were baptized the same day, August 12, 1912.

After I was baptized I felt bad the first night, as if I had a heavy weight on me. I got on my knees and asked the Lord if the Book of Mormon was true, and it was made known to me that it was. In those days, Mormons were not very popular in Georgia, and I lost a few jobs because I was a Mormon.

We moved around quite a bit, and we didn't get to attend meetings very often. One time we didn't see any



Elders for about five years. All of my children joined the Church. When we lived where we could go to Church, I carried them to Sunday School; I didn't send them. I later became a widower.

In 1959 on May 8, I married Mary Dyal Morris at Jesup, Ga. She was a member of the Church.

I have lived in Jacksonville about 30 years and four of my children live here. In this period I moved temporarily to Jesup, Ga. twice. In Jacksonville I was a night watchman at first, for a few years. Then I became self-employed in a business roasting and selling peanuts. In Jacksonville I lived in the Springfield Ward most of the time. I enjoyed doing home teaching. I was president of the elders quorum for about three years. I did some missionary work. President Whittaker talked to me about serving a full time mission but at the time I had no money. I wish I had accepted the call.

I have a testimony of the gospel. At age 95, I cannot read much but I still read the scriptures some with a magnifying glass and get members of my family to read the Book of Mormon to me. I know the power of the priesthood and have been healed through the annointings as taught in the Bible in James 5:14,15. I am currently in the Riverside Nursing Home.

Newsletter Feb 1974

## JOSEPH SPENCER BRYAN

I was born March 29, 1906, at McKinley, Florida, a flag stop on the Seaboard Railroad, eight miles west of Lake City, Columbia County, Florida. The passenger train stopped at McKinley only if you flagged it to stop or if someone was getting off. My uncle and aunt operated a small general store and a small post office inside the store. The mail sack containing the mail was thrown from the train as it passed; the outgoing mail was put in a pouch and hung on a mail crane so that the train could catch it without stopping. (The community of McKinley no longer exists.)

My father, Joseph Handin Bryan, was born at Jasper, Hamilton County, Florida. My mother Juanita Jones Bryan, was born at Lake Ogden, Florida, a very small sawmill and farming community about a mile east of McKinley, on the same railroad line. I was their first child. We lived in an abandoned church building that my father had bought. My first sister was born about a year-and-a-half after I was. Then about a year later another sister was born, but lived only a few days.

When I was five-years-old, my father got up early one morning, as he always did, and went outside. He heard mother call him three times. He ran quickly back

into the house. When he got to her she had died. I suppose she died of a heart attack, but at that time they called it acute indigestion.

Some years later, my father married again, Ada Parnell, a widow with three children, two daughters and a son, so with me and my sister they started their marriage with five children. Three additional children were born, one daughter and two sons. Altogether there were eight of us children as I was growing up.

My father owned a large farm where we lived. Our major crops were corn, cotton, peanuts, and watermelon. I still enjoy farming. Father also operated a sawmill, logging and railroad cross-tie business. My father seemed destined to be the overseer of the community. People came to him for almost everything they needed. He often gave them food from our farm, clothing, and took them to the doctor, usually to Lake City, for medical care. We had both a car and a truck, and at that time there were not many in the community who owned such.

The school I attended had only one room, with one teacher who taught all grades. When I reached age 22, I went to Los Angeles, California, for awhile, to visit my sister. Then I worked in Phoenix, Arizona, for about a year before returning home. Since work was scarce, I went to Ft. Arthur, Texas, for a short period. Again I decided to return home where I met and married Dulcie Douberly. She was a member of the Church. At that time I had no idea of the significance the Church would later be in my life.

After our marriage, we lived in Lake City, where I worked for the State Forest Service and the U.S. Forest Service, at that time the Department of Agriculture. In the Depression when the CCC was established by the Federal Government, I was made a foreman in the CCC. Later I learned a new trade, to be a crane operator. Then I began working in the construction industry operating cranes and continued until I retired in 1971.

We have one daughter and one granddaughter. They live in Akron, Ohio.

We moved to Jacksonville in 1939. We have lived at our present address since April 1943. In 1950 I joined the Church largely because of the fine example set by my wife. Also, Brother Carlos Starling played a large part in my joining the Church, and in fellowshipping me afterwards. I was baptized at the Park and Copeland Street Chapel. And since then I have always belonged to a branch or ward that meets in this chapel.

Soon after I was baptized, I was called to be a counselor in the MIA presidency. After about a year in the Church, I was ordained an Elder. On October 10, 1954, I was ordained a high Priest by Brother Alma Sonne and called to serve as a counselor in the Bishopric with

Bishop Tucker. Altogether, I served in four different Bishoprics. The second time was with Bishop Julian, the third time with Bishop Tucker again, and the fourth time with Bishop Ford. In the Bishopric one of my major assignments was always the MIA. I enjoy being a member of the Church and the Jacksonville Ward and my goal is to be a faithful member always.

Newsletter Feb 1974

## DULCIE DOUBERLEY BRYAN

I was born November 11, 1911, at Lulu, Florida, not far from Lake City, Columbia County, Florida. My father was James Gordan Douberley and my mother was Frances Lugenia Tyre.

My family on my father's side were truly 'Mormon Pioneers' in Florida. My grandfather was Arthur Nelson Douberley, born Feb 5, 1856, at Lake City, Florida. Grandmother was Polly Ann Wells, born Oct 18, 1861, in Starke, Bradford County, Florida. They were married March 4, 1880, and afterwards were farmers out in the country from Lake City. They were both baptized on April 26, 1897. Grandfather had four brothers who I believe were also early converts. My grandparents had 12 children which lived to adulthood, and father and all of the other children were members of the Church. Four of the 12 are still living today. In those early days the travelling Elders would come about once a month and stay with my grandparents' family. Grandmother cooked for them; did their laundry, etc., while they were there holding cottage meetings.

On December 23, 1906, my father married mother. He was nearly age 20 and she was soon to be 15 years old at the time. Shortly after their marriage she also joined the Church. She came from a large family but was the only one in her family to join the Church. After their marriage they were farmers in Columbia County until I was age 12, except for a short period when father operated a store at Lulu, the place where I was born. I was their fourth child of a total of six children. I had one brother and four sisters and all of us were baptized members of the Church as children.

I remember well the travelling Elders coming to visit my grandparents and parents. On one of their visits, when I was age 10, I was baptized. It was in a small pond in the woods some distance from where we lived; we walked to the pond. It was a rather cold day. The only church meetings we could attend were in homes. President Callis was our Mission President.

When I was age 12, our family moved to Lake City. Here father held different jobs, worked for the State

Road Department, the Navy, and the Veteran's Hospital. Even in Lake City there were only a few members while I was growing up. We met in various halls. On Sunday there might be 20 people in attendance. There were very few Mormon youth to associate with. Our biggest church event of the year seemed to be a July 4th celebration, an all-day picnic.

There was very little recreation in those days. The main thing was square dancing, which was very popular. At a square dance, I met Joseph S. Bryan, a square dance fan. We were married shortly after my 20th birthday, at Lake City on November 23, 1931. We lived in Columbia County area until we moved to Jacksonville in 1939. I never worked out. We have one child and one grandchild. During our married life in Lake City there were still few members of the Church. I was active but my husband did not join. My main assignment was in Relief Society.

After moving to Jacksonville, we belonged to the Branch at Copeland Street. We lived quite a distance from Church and did not attend meetings much for a couple of years. Transportation was more difficult then. My husband's second cousin, Basco Bryan, showed interest in us and helped us to keep active in the Church. A few years later Joe was on a job at Orlando and was involved in an accident which resulted in severe burns. The doctor told him to stop smoking. When he came home he called Bishop Tucker, who sent the Elders to visit him and teach him the gospel. In 1950 he joined the Church, and the Church has been the main thing in our lives together ever since. We were blessed by being married in the Salt Lake Temple on September 28, 1955.

In Jacksonville, I have enjoyed attending Church and the assignments given to me. I served as counselor in the Relief Society. Then Bishop Stanley Julian called me to serve as Relief Society President. I enjoyed serving in this calling for several years including awhile under Bishop Earl Starling. I also served a secretary in Relief Society for about five years, as a primary teacher, and on the stake primary board.

I have tried to be faithful in living the gospel, probably, the saying I am most noted for is, 'Practice what you preach'

Newsletter March 1974

## ELSIE STARLING

I have lived my entire life in northeast Florida. I was born at Doctors Inlet, Clay County, on May 26, 1901. My parents were Stella Cherry and George W. Houston. I lived at Doctors Inlet until 1917, when I came to



Jacksonville to take a business course.

My great-grandmother, Helena Blackwelder, was a very early convert to the Church in this area. She was baptized December 18, 1897, at Doctors Inlet, the first member there.

Later my mother and her sister were baptized. Mother said the first time she attended a cottage meeting held by the travelling missionaries she knew the gospel was true. I was baptized on Oct 4, 1914, in a lake near Doctors Inlet. Seven people were baptized in that occasion, including my grandmother and my grandfather. That year the first Sunday School was organized at Doctors Inlet. Since we owned no church building we met in the school house; I was the first organist, a position I held until I moved to Jacksonville. At first the attendance was usually about 20–25, but it continued to grow. About 1920 a small chapel was built at Doctors Inlet. My calling and service as organist brought me much joy. Some years later the members living in the Doctors Inlet area were made part of the Wesconnett Branch. Now they are included in the rapidly growing Green Cove Springs Branch and the branch meetings are held at Doctors Inlet.

I married Carlos Starling on Oct 19, 1927. After we were married a few months, I stopped working to rear a family. We have four children. In 1943, I returned to employment to help with expenses for the children to go to school and on missions. I worked for a furniture store as a bookkeeper and office manager. All four children have served full-time missions. Earl, together with his wife, filled a second mission from 1969–71.

I have enjoyed greatly my service in the Church over the years. In the Jacksonville Branch I served first as organist, then as Beehive leader, YWMIA, Junior Gleaner Leader, Mmen–Gleaner Leader, Relief Society secretary and president.

In January 1936, I was called to serve as the First District President of the Relief Society in this area. The branches in our district were very scattered, including Orlando and Tampa areas. We held two leadership meetings a month, then they were called Union meetings. There was much traveling. To avoid branch leaders from traveling too much we held one monthly Union meeting in Tampa. We would leave Jacksonville Saturday afternoon so we could get there on time for the Union meeting at 10 a.m. Sunday. We would arrive back in Jacksonville after midnight.

I served in this capacity continuously for about eleven years, but was released in 1947, the year the Florida Stake was organized. In this period we organized a large number of Relief Society organizations in the branches. I'll always remember the joys and blessings of this service.

After the Florida Stake was organized I was called to serve as the Stake L.D.S. Girls Leader. Then I was called to be president of the Stake YWMIA, a calling in which I served for nine years. Later I was called to this position a second time and served for another five years.

I have always thought missionary service was important. In the district I served a calling as a 'local missionary' and after the Florida Stake was organized I completed two missions as a stake missionary. At present, I am serving as librarian in the Florida Branch Genealogical Library.

There is much joy in serving in the Church. It is through activity in the Church and rendering church service that we gain strong testimonies of the gospel.

Newsletter March 1974

## CARLOS STARLING

I was born Feb 5, 1903, at Noma, Holmes County, Florida. My father, Otho Starling, and his parents were among the early converts to the Church in Alabama. My grandfather, Solomon Wesley Starling, and my grandmother, Louisiana Melvin Starling, were baptized May 30, 1893. My father was baptized April 30, 1894. My mother, Ida Starling was baptized August 2, 1902, shortly after she married father.

My parents taught me the gospel as a child and I was baptized February 6, 1911, at the age of eight. I remember well the occasion. I walked with dad and the travelling missionaries about two-and-a-half miles to a creek. It was a very cold day in February. The missionary who baptized me was shivering in the cold water. I had been cold but I seemed to feel warm in the water. Only the four of us were present. Then I was confirmed a member of the Church at our home.

The first time I saw a Mormon Church building was when our family took a trip to Utah. We spent about six months at Ephraim, Utah, in 1911. During this time I was sealed to my parents in the Manti Temple. After leaving the West, I didn't see a Mormon meeting house until I was about age 16 or 17, at which time I was working in Columbus, Georgia.

In 1921, I came to Jacksonville. My parents had previously moved here. Jacksonville is where I became active in Church service. My first assignment was to be an assistant teacher in Sunday School assisting Garrad Rudd. I observed for awhile and when it came time to teach my first lesson I studied about 60 hours. My lesson lasted only part of the class period. After my brief message was completed some of the boys in class became unruly; and to control them I dropped one of them from

the upstairs window. I stopped teaching, but later on I taught in the Sunday School for a period of about two years. There was an MIA when I came to Jacksonville, but it was greatly different from the MIA program of recent years.

I lived near the Jacksonville Branch Chapel. It was at our Church meetings that I met the girl who was to become my wife — Elsie. She was staying with the Croft family, our neighbors across the street. After about six months of courting we decided to go to St. Augustine to be married. We were married on Oct 19, 1927, and on June 1, 1938, we and our children were sealed together in the Salt Lake Temple.

My second Church assignment was to serve as a counselor in the Jacksonville Branch presidency. I served as a counselor to President T.C. Copeland about three years starting about 1933. Brother Copeland was later released to serve on the District High Council, and I was called to serve as Branch President and served until 1939.

In the autumn of 1939, I began serving a full-time three month mission in the Southern States Mission. I was sent to Mobile, Alabama. Immediately upon arriving I was called to be the Branch President and served in that capacity for my full mission, in addition to performing usual missionary duties. My mission turned out to be for a period of five months rather than three.

In the Jacksonville Ward Chapel I have served in two Bishoprics. I was first called to be a counselor to Bishop Stanley Julian and later to Bishop Alvie C. Tucker.

Over the years I have always had a desire to be active in missionary work, and I am currently serving as a stake missionary and as secretary to the High Priests Group. It has been a joy to have helped in bringing the gospel message to many members in the Jacksonville area, and I feel greatly blessed to have had the opportunity to perform many baptisms. I have always stressed to new converts the principle of tithing. If they pay tithing, they will be happy in the Church. The greatest blessing of paying tithing is that one receives a strong testimony of the gospel.

My employment at present and continuously since I was age 15 has been operating motion picture film projectors in theaters...a work period of 56 years. I have no immediate plan to retire. Movies have changed greatly during this period of service. For many of these years the theaters showed only silent pictures. It is my understanding that the 9th installation of talking pictures in the United States was one that I operated in Jacksonville. This occupation has been a second job for me——most of my life, I have held other jobs in the trades during the daytime.....

Newsletter June 1974

## LULA DURRANCE BRYAN THOMPSON

I am a native of north Florida, born June 19, 1905, in a rural area near Lake City, Columbia County. My father was William Durrance and my mother was Lenorah Basheba Dowling.

My parents were early Mormon converts in Florida. Father often spoke of their conversion. In December 1897, he was plowing on his farm. Two Mormon Elders wearing black, frock coats approached him in the field. They invited him to a meeting in the area's two-room school house. Most farmers in the area wanted to attend all special events held. He knocked off work early. After the meeting he learned the Elders were planning to sleep outside under the stars; he invited them home. Mother went to bed but father talked with the Elders the entire night. He was converted that night and knew the gospel was true. The next day they taught Mother; she didn't accept the gospel so readily. But a few days later, when the Elders came to baptize Father she decided to be baptized also. They were baptized the day after Christmas, December 26, 1897, in a little creek near their farm. It was cold and they had to break a little ice. Their children age eight or older, except one daughter who was getting married, were also baptized that day. They suffered much persecution for having joined the Church.

A number of families in the Durrance family line were early converts at about the same time, in different areas of the South. None of them knowing that the others had joined. Some families who are descendants through this line are members in the Jacksonville area stakes: Boone, Tilton, Padgett, and Kirkland families.

My parents were blessed with a large family. There was no doctor or hospital in the area and Mother was saddened by losing her first six babies at birth. For the seventh birth Mother went to live with her mother in Lake City where there was a one-room hospital. The child was born premature and weighed only three pounds. He is now age 87, an Elder in the Lake City Ward...Oscar Durrance. After Oscar's birth, mother had eight additional children, a total of 15. There were four sons and four daughters that lived. I was the baby of the family. Five of us have been married in the Temple. Mother lived to reach age 91. The day she was buried her two hundredth descendant was born.

While growing up, I had no opportunity to attend a Mormon Church. Missionaries came about once a year. They would live with us on the farm for a week or two and hold cottage meetings. I was baptized on April 30, 1918, at age 12 in the same creek where my parents were baptized 23 years earlier. Ethel Spradley's mother, Emily



Durrance, and two of my future cousins by marriage were baptized on that occasion also. Once my father donated land for a small non-Mormon church and cemetery on the basis that anyone could preach a funeral service. It was called the Oak Grove Baptist Church. I attended some meetings there. I attended the small two-room country school having to walk four miles each way. I finished the 8th grade.

In my youth there were no Mormon boys to date. There was a couple who were sharecroppers on Daddy's farm who had a nephew James Basco Bryan who came to visit them. Basco and I were fond of each other. He traveled 25 miles each way on weekends, on horseback, to court me. He was the only boy I ever dated. After courting about a year, we were married on the 4th of July, 1920, at Lake City. I was age 15 and Basco 19.

In April 1925, Basco and I moved to Jacksonville. We then had three children. This was my first opportunity to attend a Mormon chapel, the small chapel on Claude Street. Later that year we attended the dedication of our present ward chapel on the corner of Park and Copeland Streets. We were the parents of ten children, five sons and five daughters, all but the last one was born at home. All ten of our children were baptized in the basement font of our Park Street Chapel.

Although my husband was not baptized a member of the Church until we had been married 29 years, he seemed to have been converted ever since our marriage. He set a good example and supported me and our children in our church activities. November 5, 1949, he was baptized by Brother Carlos Starling. On April 30, 1951, he died at the age of 50. All of his years in Jacksonville he was employed by the Fruit Growers Express Railroad. He loved farming and always had a large garden to provide ample food, even during the Depression years. In August 1951, my youngest children and I had the opportunity to go to the Salt Lake Temple and be sealed to him for time and eternity. Since then one additional child has been sealed to us.

I have enjoyed all of my Church assignments. I was blessed to serve two times as 1st counselor in the Relief Society presidency. I enjoyed serving as a Stake missionary.

We considered each of our 10 children as a special blessing. My husband often quoted from the 127th Psalm, 'Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them...' All of our children are living. My five sons have served in the armed forces, three on a career basis. Robert just retired after 24 years; Mickey is in the Air Force stationed in Italy; Joseph is a captain in the Army. Four of my daughters and one son have been married in the Temple. My son Joseph and my daughter Frances Thornton served

full-time missions for the Church, Joseph in the California mission and Frances in the Northwestern states mission. At present seven of my children are very active in the Church. I have 28 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

On July 14, 1952, I married Jessie James Thompson, a widower with no children. On June 6, 1953, he was baptized a member of the Church. He helped me raise my younger children. We have enjoyed our life together in the Jacksonville Ward. We both have a testimony of the gospel and wish to bear it to everyone. In addition to our Church activities, we enjoy working in the yard and with our flowers and our vegetable garden. Many people in the ward will remember me for making jams and preserves. Many seemed to have enjoyed them, especially the fig preserves.

Newsletter Nov. 1973

## OSSIE J. BOONE

I was born January 11, 1918, in Blackankle, Tattnall County, Georgia, a remote place in the turpentine woods about seven miles from Glenville. People were few and far between. We walked about three-and-a-half miles to the country road to reach our mail box. We lived in a small farm and enlisted from food grown on the farm, a few hogs and cattle, including wild ones. We ate fish we could catch. Mother made our clothes and shoes, often we went barefooted, cold or hot weather. When I was about age 12, I started earning a little money gathering turpentine from the woods, along with my older brother, that is when there was no work to do on the farm. Schooling was limited. The only school consisted of one room with one teacher teaching all children in grades one through seven. School was available only a few months each year.

My ancestors were pioneer American stock. One received a grant in Georgia in 1767. A second great-grandfather, John H. Boone, settled in the area where I was born in the 1830's. Early settlers located in this poor part of Georgia because it could be reached by boat. The first person in the area to become a Mormon was Dowse B. Padgett, baptized in 1902. He was the father of Carlos L. Padgett who is well-known to Jacksonville Ward members. Dowse Padgett's sister was baptized in 1904. She was the mother of James R. Boone, the patriarch of Jacksonville Stake.

James R. Boone and I were fairly close, and it attracted my attention when he was called to serve in the Southern States Mission. He came home occasionally since our area was part of his missionary circuit. He

taught me the gospel. I was baptized at age 19 in 1937 in a creek near his home. I was the first of my family to join the Church. Later, my mother, grandmother, and two of my three sisters were baptized. I was a member of the Church about three years before I saw a Mormon chapel while on a visit to Savannah. Awhile after my baptism, a Sunday School was organized in our area in the one-room school house. To get there I had to cross swamp land. I would take off my clothes and wade through the swamps holding my clothes above my head, then dress again on the other side.

October 28, 1942, I was drafted in the Army and was soon shipped to fight on the front lines in North Africa. After the German Army was driven out, I served with the fifth Army in the Invasion of Sicily, in the first division. There was fierce fighting. I was captured as a prisoner in a group with 14 others. They took us to Naples, Italy, and then to Munich, Germany. I was a P.O.W. for about two years. I was fortunate to be physically able to work, and after a month I was sent with some other prisoners out on a farm to work, a blessing because of the exercise and better food. After a few months I was able to write home and get mail occasionally. Red Cross boxes were appreciated. We stayed on the farm until late Feb 1945 when Russia with its big drive was getting close. The Germans began evacuating that northern part of Germany and took us along. For days we had to walk all day in snow and ice and sleep at night in whatever shelter was available, usually a cattle barn. Finally we marched out of the snow country and were quartered on a large farm near a major air field.

Early one morning on a beautiful clear day, we heard something roaring. Looking up, we saw squadron after squadron of B-17's coming. These were tense, thrilling moments. My eyes were good. I saw a puff of smoke from under the foremost bomber, then a black object falling. When it had disappeared behind the trees, the earth began to tremble. I knew they had hit the airfield. After the bombers completed their mission, the sky was speckled with our fighter planes which finished the job. Before long a German General gave an order for all of us Americans to be shot. It was frightening. But the German Army refused to carry out the order. Shortly after this, the Russians were getting close and attacking. The Germans decided to move toward the American front. We arrived at the American lines before daylight on May 3, 1945. We were liberated by the 82nd paratroop division. I wanted to kiss the soldier who liberated me! What a feeling to be free again. I was discharged from the Army in October 1945 and returned to Georgia.

In early 1948 I moved to Jacksonville. In September of that year I began working for the Board of Public

Instruction where I am still employed. I will soon be eligible for retirement.

In Jacksonville, it has been a great blessing to be active in the Church programs regularly held over the years. I have accepted many Church callings and have always enjoyed serving in the Lord's work.

UPDATE: Ossie Boone never retired from the Board of Public Instruction, but continued to work there until his sudden death on June 21, 1996. He served faithfully in his Church callings. He never married. Ossie had many friends throughout the Church. He was a wonderful vocalist who sang in the choir and a great guitarist who learned to play as a very small child. He practiced tuning and playing chords by listening to music on the radio while standing on a chair.

He was respected by all who knew him for his example and faithfulness in the Church.

Newsletter Oct. 1973

## IDA AUSTON STARLING

I am now 91 years old. My earthly life began in Clayhatchee, Dale Co., Ala., Oct. 1, 1882. I was the youngest of four girls and one boy of John Green Auston who was Scotch-Irish and English, and Nancy Craven who was English and Dutch. My other known ancestry lines are Justice, Wilder and Parrott.

I was reared on a farm, as were both my parents. I had a very happy childhood. Peddlers some times came by and showed their merchandise. However, the most impressive sight was seen one day when a double column of men, eight or more, wearing black derby hats and black Prince Albert Coats, carrying grips and umbrellas, were walking in the road in front of our home. "Mormon preachers going to old Uncle Johnny McElvaines to hold conference," my mother said.

My parents were Baptists. Late in 1899 or early 1900, a family, six girls and their parents by the name of Starling, Mormons, moved into our neighborhood. Later, a son Otho, who had been teaching a writing school came. He was 18, poor and a Mormon, considered two counts against him. I was forbidden to go with him. However, we soon decided each other was special and on one of the darkest nights, I left a note in the Bible for my mother and we rode away in a borrowed buggy. We found a Justice of the Peace the next day about noon and were married July 6, 1900. Although I was ignored and cool treated by my family, except for one sister, in time they welcomed me back with Otho, whom they learned to love and respect.

I read Otho's books while he worked. When I read



Orson Pratt's works I was converted to Mormonism. I knew it was the truth. I was baptized in a small creek on August 2, 1902, and confirmed that same day.

These were the days of mobs and persecutions. Needless to say, we received some. Living in the Mission field, our home was always open to the missionaries. Sometimes they had to sleep in the woods, sometimes they were harassed about their mail and sometimes attacked. They were welcomed and loved by our family, and we were blessed to have them in our home and glad to share food and shelter and to do their laundry. They were fine men.

I have had many faith-promoting experiences, and shall share one. When Edith, my youngest daughter was a baby, I had typhoid. We had written to the Mission Home for them to send some Elders. One evening my sight began to fail me, the room was filled with thick darkness, and I seemed to have a weight on my chest and couldn't breathe well. A knock was heard at the door, and I asked Otho not to be long. When he returned, two missionaries were with him. The instant they entered the room all darkness left. They administered to me and I began to get better. The next morning Dr. Ellis asked Otho what had happened, as he didn't expect to find me living. Otho told him, and the doctor said, "I always give the Lord credit in my work."

Colin, our first child, a perfect baby boy was born in December 1901, but stillborn because of a jaundice condition I had. It was a great sorrow to us and I almost died, too. We later had four more children, two sons and two daughters. In the spring of 1911, we and our children, went to Ephraim, Utah, where we lived for six months. We and our children were sealed on August 3, 1911, in the Manti Temple, and we were able to perform Temple work for our kindred dead. We moved as a family to Jacksonville in 1925. It has been a pleasure to see the Church grow here over the last 48 years and enjoy Church activity. In 1930-31, we spent six months in Mesa, Arizona, doing Temple work.

I know God lives and that He restored His Church in these latter days. My husband has been a great blessing to me. He truly never spoke cross to me. He passed away December 8, 1966. I shall rejoin him in the future, for eternity.

Newsletter Sept 1973

## RUTH JONES HILL

I was born March 22, 1893, in the country one mile west of Callahan in Nassau County Florida, the fifth child of a family of nine children, three boys and six

girls. My father and mother had both been previously married; father had six children, five sons and one daughter, at home when he married mother, who had one daughter.

My mother accepted the gospel about the time the first missionaries were sent to Florida. She was baptized in 1897. The Elders had walked from Jacksonville To Callahan, 20 miles, and happened to stop at our home to ask for a place to spend the night. No one was ever refused a bed and something to eat at our home so we took them in, which was the greatest blessing that ever came to us. Even though father never joined the Church, he knew it was true and taught it to his friends. Mother was smart, a hard worker and knew more about farm work than my father, because his father had slaves and he had never been taught to work. Mother took care of the family and farm. Father was the County Tax Collector for 16 years and thus spent a great deal of time in Fernandina, the county seat.

About once a year the missionaries would stop at our home on their way to conference at Jacksonville and hold meetings. Not having a LDS Church to attend, we went to the Baptist and Methodist Church and Sunday School. All of my sisters joined the Baptist Church, but I decided to wait until I could learn more of mother's religion.

After completing five years of teaching in little country schools in Nassau and Duval counties, I decided to attend Massey Business College in Jacksonville. This gave me the opportunity to attend the LDS Church. I came to Jacksonville in March 1917, attended Sunday School and Sacrament meetings regularly, and was baptized November 17, 1917, by Elder Edward Blumel in the St. Johns River at Panama Park and confirmed by Thomas Copeland.

My first calling in the Church was secretary of Sunday School. While we worshipped in the little chapel on Claude Street, I served as secretary under superintendents Hamilton Mattox, John N. Chester, and John Melrose. After moving to our new chapel on Park Street, I served as secretary under superintendents Charles Latham and Acel J. Beasley, Sr. I also taught a class in Junior Sunday School for several years. At present, I am enjoying serving as secretary for the Gospel Doctrine Class in Sunday School and as a Relief Society visiting teacher.

I was married to Frank C. Hill on October 20, 1924, in the chapel on Claude Street. My husband passed away January 5, 1935, on our son's (James E. Hill) eighth birthday. To earn a living, I have held the following positions: five years as a school teacher, eight years as a Western Union Multiplex Telegraph operator, six years as a WPA Timekeeper and 20 years as a clerk-typist at

the Jacksonville Naval Air Station. Upon reaching age 70, the compulsory retirement age with Civil Service, I had to retire on March 31, 1963. After resting four years, I began employment again, typing at home for the S&W Trailer Company, and I held this position for six years until my 80th birthday. Then I decided 45 years was long enough to work. However, I can't say that I have retired because now I spend my time doing genealogy research.

My advice to all ....keeping active in the Church is the surest road to happiness.

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### *PERFECT HISTORY*

*Can some things be perfect?*

*Some say "Nay."*

*But I say "Yea."*

*A journey that unfurls*

*The history of our world*

*By God's own Hand can be.*

*To learn and understand the way*

*The mysteries of God's Plan and Day*

*'Tis' perfect as can be*

*Our history!*

*In His councils up above*

*Foundations were laid in perfect love*

*T'was there He revealed to you and me*

*Perfection in our history*

*What greater blessing can we share*

*To know of His great love and care*

*To all He giveth generously*

*A blend of perfect history.*

*La Viece Moore Smallwood*

### *MARCHING THROUGH ZION*

*Oh, we're marching, marching through Zion*

*Great cities once stood where we trod*

*Sacred lands in their seasons*

*Are hallowed and sanctioned by God*

*Oh, come with me, march through Zion*

*Raise your banner high*

*Our army is marching through Zion*

*The day of the Lord is nigh.*

*Oh, come march through her canyons*

*Through valleys and pastures still*

*Where once the voices of Saints were heard*

*From the highest hill.*

*Oh, march and hear their whisperings*

*From graves beneath our feet*

*They fought a glorious battle*

*N'er did they retreat*

*Oh, march through lands now barren*

*Hear their voices ring*

*They are gone but not forgotten*

*Death here hath no sting!*

*We praise them for their courage*

*As they march to Zion's call*

*Trod the path encouraged*

*Oh, Ye Saints we must not fall!*

*La Viece M. Smallwood*





**Gold and Green Ball held at Park and Copeland Streets on May 18, 1935**  
**Couples Demonstrating Different Dance Positions in MIA Dances**

Left to right: Ruth Croft with Orson Croft, Vella Valentine with Alvin Chace, Robbie (?) with Russell Zetterower, Elder Andy Cooley, Queen Zullene Jordan, Elder Black, Eunice (?) with Dyruff Starling, Hazel Wilford with Billy Copeland, Corinne Jordan with Lawrence Copeland.



*Alzada Beasley Chace*



# CLEO MABLE (MATTOX) ANDERSON

## GEORGIA-FLORIDA

Cleo Anderson was born November 12, 1896, in Homerville, Clinch County, Georgia. A tiny, petite woman, with flaming auburn hair in her youth, she became, through her heritage and faith, one of the most zealous disciples of the LDS Church.

Cleo was the daughter of Hamilton (Hamp) Lucius Mattox and Elizabeth (Lizzie)Lorene (Groe) Ecord, who were devout Methodist until the late 1800's when two Mormon missionaries stopped by their home. Cleo, in her history, remembers the story well.

"They asked Mother if they could spend the night as it was raining real hard. Mother gave them two chairs and told them to sit at the end of the long hallway until Father came home.

"When Papa came home, Mother told him about the Elders being in the hall, and said he could send them away if he wanted, but she would not turn a dog out in that rain. Instead of sending them on their way, he invited them to supper and to spend the night. Mother played some Methodist songs on the piano and Papa and the Elders sang. One of the Elders asked Mother if she would play some of their songs, which she did.

"Then Papa asked the Elders to tell him something about what the Mormons believed. They had been there all evening and had not said one word about their beliefs. The Elders explained the gospel to Papa, and he believed it as soon as he heard it. The Elders stayed at our home for a few days, and Papa sent them to see his Father and Mother who lived in Argyle, Georgia, six miles from our home in Homerville. The Elders were received very kindly by my grandparents and after hearing the gospel, Grandmother wanted to join the Church.

"After that, our home was the home for the Elders. A few months later when one of the Elders was making out his report, he mentioned about my mother joining the Church. Mother laughed at him and said that she would never join the Mormon Church. He then told Mother that she would come into the Church before her mother-in-law did. My mother said, 'Oh, no, I will not either'.

"The next time the Elders came, Papa got permission for them to speak in the Methodist Church. After the meeting the Elders announced that they were going to baptize Brother Mattox and his mother, Helen Mar Mattox, that afternoon. Uncle Plant, Daddy's brother, was supposed to bring his mother over to Daddy's to be baptized, but he visited a friend's house and stayed too long. My mother heard that my father was going to be

baptized so she decided to be baptized also. When Uncle Plant arrived with my grandmother, my mother had already been baptized, making true what the Elder had said, that Mother would join the Church before my grandmother. My parents were baptized on July 8, 1900, by Elder John H. Bankhead and Pres. George W. Skidmore. Grandmother was baptized the next day. The Mattox family were considered to be respectable people in the community until they joined the Mormon Church.

A few years later, Hamp Mattox moved his family to Jacksonville, Florida.

"When we moved to Jacksonville I attended my first Mormon Church. I wanted to join, but Father would not let me because he said I did not know enough. My grandmother, Helen Mar Mattox, came to visit us and I told her I wanted to be baptized. She told my father I was going to be baptized, so on April 10, 1910, I was baptized by President Lionell LaFayette Mylro and Elder Robert Andrew. I was very happy being a Mormon.

"I didn't know much about the Church, but my mother told me when I joined never to deny it no matter what. I realized in a few months why she told me that because the next term of school my teacher, Miss Arnold, asked the pupils what church they belonged to. When it came time for me to tell them that I was a Mormon, Miss Arnold and all the children went to laughing and making fun of me. There was another girl in the class room who was a Mormon and she denied it. Miss Arnold said, 'I know you are because your mother was on her death bed and the Elders administered to her and she got well.' From then on I could not play with the other children, but I finished out that term of school. When the next term wasn't any better, I stopped school. My mother never did know that I quit school to the day she died, and if I had told her she would have made me go back. But she was sick and I did not tell her. She died May 28, 1912."

Helen Mar Mattox, Hamp's mother, remained in Georgia and continued to be faithful to the gospel even though there were not enough members to have a Church in the Homerville area. The only time she attended Church was while visiting Hamp and his family in Jacksonville. She became dedicated to the genealogy program and submitted many family names to the temple. She supported the missionary work by subscribing to the Liahona for herself, and many others. She also shared the gospel with her son Lee and his wife Mamie who lived with her. The Elders baptized them as well as each of their children in Cane Creek, that flowed in front of their home. Even though none of this family was able to attend a Mormon Church for the next 30-40 years, they remembered the things they had been taught

and each one became active in the Church whenever they had the opportunity. Years later some of Helen Mar Mattox's grandchildren became full time Temple workers and have continued to hold offices and build up the Church in the South.

Wrote one of her great granddaughters, "On March 21, 1891, a Methodist minister named George MacDonnell visited Homerville, Georgia, for the first time to preach to the people. He kept a journal and in it he wrote that he ate with Helen Mar Mattox and her family. He wrote, 'I had a pleasant talk with Sister Mattox. She is the one religious light at this place. May God spare her long.' And yes, the Lord did spare her for 27 more years, until she was 86 years old. It was long enough that she could be taught the true Gospel of Jesus Christ and given enough time to be an eternal influence on her family both living and dead."

Cleo Mattox married John Riley Meeker when she was only 16 years old and they had a daughter, Elizabeth. When he was bitter toward the Church, the marriage dissolved, and she returned home to her father. They attended Church regularly and before long she met her second husband, Frank Anderson, the only eligible boy in the branch, she said. Cleo was active in the YLMIA program where she served as second counselor to Ruth Jones Hill. Frank was second counselor to Clifton Grindstaff in YMMIA. They worked together in that program until they married May 15, 1918.

Frank Benjamin Anderson was the son of John Thomas and Ellen Eulalia Mims Anderson. He was born in Monks Corner, S.C. April 8, 1895, and throughout his life his occupation was that of a chief engineer.

By the time the couple had five children, two of them had died after a short time, and she was advised never to have another child or her life would be in danger. At a Church conference she asked President Charles Callis for a blessing and he and Elder Ursenbeck gave it.

"He promised me if I would live the gospel to the best of my ability, keep the word of wisdom and do all that I could and many other things, that I would have my baby with the least pain possible and live to raise her up to maturity. He told me of many other things I must do if I wanted this blessing fulfilled, and if I did not do them I had no promise.

"On January 7, 1923, my baby was born with three pains. As soon as I was able my work began in the Church. On August 3, 1925, our third son, Charles Heber, and the only one to live thus far, was born. He was given a wonderful blessing by George F. Richards.

Through the ensuing years the Andersons moved around with Frank's job as an engineer. Other children were born and others died, but she kept faith because of Elder Callis's blessing. While she lingered once at death's

door she had a beautiful dream where she saw her small babies. She tried desperately to go to the children, but could not as she had not yet been to the temple. She was very impressed by the reality of the dream.

"We worked in the Church for about three years, then Frank was sent to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. In about six weeks I followed him with the children. There was not a branch of the Church in Ft. Lauderdale so we had to go to Miami to Church. They were meeting in the Woodmen of the World Hall, and we enjoyed these meetings. We were still living in Ft. Lauderdale when President Callis called all the Elders out of South Florida. Just having moved to Ft. Lauderdale and not knowing what to do, I wrote President Callis and asked him if we should leave. His answer was that the wrath of the Lord was being poured out on all the world, and it would only be the Children of Israel who lived the gospel who would be spared. So we stayed and the hurricane came in September 1828 and did a lot of damage in the town and killed between three and five thousand people around the lake. The Lord was good to us. Our house was the only one in the court not damaged. Frank was sent to Albany, N.Y. but one month later he came to move me back to Jacksonville, so I could have Pres. Callis give me another blessing as I was going to have another baby. I sent for Pres. Callis and he asked the Elder who picked him up at the train station how much time did he think I had, and the Elder told him that I didn't look like I was going to have a baby. He told the Elder to tell me he would be back in two weeks and he would see me then. The very next night the baby was born dead."

The couple moved back and forth from Jacksonville to other locations with Frank's job and once while in Jacksonville, she gave birth to another baby boy. Then a tragic accident happened on the way home from Primary while her daughter Virginia was riding with someone else. In three days she came down with lock jaw, but she survived. In 1932 Frank returned from New York. Cleo came down with pneumonia and when she grew worse on January 28, 1933, their baby son, John Hamilton, was born and died within five hours, also with pneumonia.

The little family continued moving back and forth from Jacksonville to other locations. Another child was born. In 1939 another accident occurred when son Richard was hit by a car and suffered a fractured skull and broken legs. Richard was administered to and recovered. The couple continued to exercise their faith, and served faithfully in numerous callings where ever they lived. Once more they returned to Jacksonville. In 1940, Cleo was set apart as genealogy president by Pres. O.H. Hocking. Discouraged because she knew nothing



about the subject, she received her patriarchal blessing and became filled with excitement when she was promised that she would be a Savior on Mt. Zion through her genealogy work. With the help of her counselors, they organized eight family organizations, recorded all the cemeteries in the Springfield district which was about 400,000 names and made out one family group sheet for every family in the branch. In addition she served as first counselor to Sister Kertie Keller in Relief Society from 1940-42.

She was called to be a local missionary by Bro. Earl Starling June 12, 1942.

In 1946 she moved to Savannah and in 1947 she was set apart as District Genealogical Supervisor of South Georgia, covering five branches. She served with Sisters Effie Saxton and Flora Hughes. The group, along with Church members, recorded all cemeteries in South Georgia that they could find and were instrumental in getting every active family to go to the temple. She served in that position for 11 years.

Eventually she was called to serve as Relief Society president and was given the challenge to get up money to build a new chapel. They gave turkey suppers, sold soft drinks, and cakes, but she remembers the first two big donors. Her husband Frank gave a \$1,000 and a Sister Hughes \$500. She left Savannah in 1959 for Jacksonville before the chapel was completed. In 1960, Frank came home to have surgery and had a heart attack forcing him to retire. For 11 years she served as the Spiritual Living teacher in Jacksonville Second Ward in addition to working in genealogy. For a while they worked in the Washington, D.C. Temple until Frank's health forced them back home to Jacksonville. He died October 25, 1976. She returned to the Temple in April 1977, but returned home due to illness. Sister Cleo Anderson's faith and spirituality remained with her throughout her life and she will be remembered as truly dedicated to genealogy and temple work, in addition to all of her callings being steadfastly carried out. She was always very prim and proper, pleasant and friendly. Her dedicated service will never be forgotten in the areas where she lived and served, for she was always willing to serve with devotion to her callings. She died September 21, 1984, in Lilburn, Georgia, and is buried with her husband in Jacksonville, Florida. Their 11 children: Elizabeth Lorene (Meeker) Clyburn, Frances Marie Brennen, Frank Benjamin, Thomas Hamilton, Virginia Louise Varnedoe, Charles Heber, James Harwood, Dudley Groce, John Hamilton, Newel Richard, and Cleo Eulalia Kotter

*This is my tribute of gratitude to the Giver of all good for His many blessings. Especially upon one of my little boys and myself has He poured out His mercy. I wish to bear testimony to all the world that I know through the workings of the Spirit, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and that in accepting 'Mormonism' I have laid hold upon the pure gospel of Jesus.*

*M. Florence Harvin*  
testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908

*I will bear my testimony. I am a Latter-day Saint. I believe this Church to be the true Church of God, and I believe Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. I like to read the Journal and all the 'Mormon' books.*

*Lavenia Hill*  
testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908

*I am a Latter-day Saint. I know this Church is the right one. I believe that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. I like to read the 'Mormon' books and the Journal.*

*Susannah Grisham*  
testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908

*I believe the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true Church, that the Book of Mormon is the word of God and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. I love the Journal.*

*Belle M. Grisham*  
testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908

*To my brothers and sisters in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and to all the world, I bear this testimony: I know that the gospel taught by the Latter-day Saints is the gospel of Christ. I know that Jesus is the Son of the living God. I feel every day to thank God for blessings received, but above all do I thank Him for a knowledge of the true and everlasting gospel.*

*Mary V. Colby,*  
President  
*Latter-day Saints' Relief Society, Jacksonville.*  
testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, May 1908

# JOHN JACKSON BLACKWELDER

\*OAK GROVE/PROVIDENCE FLORIDA

When Gottlieb Schwarzwaldler left the Black Forest area of Germany where he was born in 1722, little did he know that many of his American posterity would play such an important and significant roll in establishing the Lord's Kingdom in the southern part of the new world. Upon his arrival in America on September 26, 1794, he changed his name to Caleb Blackwelder, a name to become historically written down in the annals of southern LDS history.

The first of his posterity to settle in Florida was Moses Blackwelder and his wife Mary Ann Lastinger. They were living in the Baker County Olustee/Ocean Pond area when a band of Indians snatched two of their children and killed them. The family moved to Union County in the Oak Grove/Providence area, and Moses's son, Martin Van Buren Blackwelder and his wife Nancy (Nettles) began the saga for this story.

Providence was established about 1830 and was named, like many other American places, for the divine protection hoped for there. Oak Grove was a connecting neighborhood in the area near Providence. It was surrounded by huge towering oaks saturated with long strands of gray Spanish moss. It had become a thriving area with about 50 farm families. The close knit community became the nucleus for a strange new religion that was received with zeal despite growing persecution. Oak Grove, so named for its picturesque surroundings, became an eternal heritage for countless Latter-day Saints and lived up to its purpose and name for being a place of divine refuge and shelter for those who chose to worship as they pleased.

When the Mormon missionaries entered the area, many people in the flourishing little community began to listen with interest to them as they told the story of the restored gospel. As they began to enter the waters of baptism, the group grew in numbers, in strength, in testimony, in devotion, and in dedication. One such family was John Jackson Blackwelder (born Dec 5, 1879) and his wife Emma Kerce (born April 1, 1885). They were married on December 4, 1901, at Lake Butler, Florida, one month before his 22nd birthday. Sixteen-year-old Emma had trapped and sold quail to earn money enough to buy cloth and lace to make her wedding dress.

Emma's parents, Peter and Susan Gaskins Kerce, opposed their daughter's choice of religion. She was cut from their will and denied the 140 acres of land and a herd of six cows and one bull being allotted as an inheritance to the Kerce children. Later, when two of Emma's

sisters and their husbands (Wes and Mary Kerce Williams and Glen and Dora Kerce Nettles) joined the Church, her father reconsidered and gave Emma her endowment.

The couple, like their neighbors, were farmers and worked hard to feed and clothe their ten children. There were no stores nearby so they, like their neighbors, were self sufficient people producing their own corn, potatoes, peanuts, vegetables and livestock such as hogs, chickens, cows and goats for meat and milk. They grew sugar cane and made their own syrup. The principal cash crop was Sea Island cotton, a premium long staple fiber.

Around 1887, according to Emma and John's daughter, Ouida Nettles, those who had joined the Church in the community began to sacrifice their time and labor to build a meeting place which they called the Oak Grove Church, and the membership grew rapidly.

Four years after John and Emma married, they heard the gospel preached by the missionaries travelling through the area. They believed the message they heard was true. Their baptism day was June 23, 1905, and they began immediately to be active and devoted in their new faith.

In the fall of 1908 the missionaries, (one being an Elder Spencer) organized and taught school in the Oak Grove chapel. Two years later a one room school house was built for the students. David Blackwelder, first born child of John and Emma, was one of the school's first students.



**Emma Kerce Blackwelder**  
*First Relief Society President, Oak Grove Branch*



On October 27, 1912, John was ordained an Elder and called to serve as the branch president of Oak Grove. He was set apart by President Charles Callis. He served in this position until December 4, 1938, a total of 26 years. His wife Emma became the first Relief Society president of the branch that day and selected Leona Williams Nettles as her first counselor and Leona Hammonds Keene as second counselor. When John was released in 1938, Luther Thomas, husband of his daughter Susie, was called to replace him. He served two years before moving to Lake City in Columbia County, where he eventually served as patriarch when the first Lake City Stake was organized. He served faithfully in that calling for 10 years.

One of the problems John Blackwelder was faced with was educating the many church members in the area both spiritually and physically. Sometime following his new calling, the church headquarters sent two special missionaries to the Oak Grove Branch to teach the Saints how to plant, grow, harvest and cook nutritious vegetables and the proper use and preparation of fruits. Many of the Saints suffered from pellagra. President Blackwelder, along with the other Saints in the community, learned how to plant carrots, beets, cabbage and many leafy vegetables along with their corn and beans. As they learned how to cook and eat nutritiously, their health improved.

The Blackwelder's son Parley remembers that a missionary named Price taught his mother to cook carrots and beets.

"We didn't really like them at first, but we learned to like them," he said.

Ouida remembers a specific conference at Oak Grove Branch when President Charles A. Callis, mission president, pleaded with the Saints to live the word of wisdom and eat good food.

"I remember him sitting at our long family table eating Mama's delicious food prepared on an old wood stove. He complimented her great biscuits, a talent she handed down to my sister Susie, who has been the family biscuit maker since."

The couple reared ten children while their service and devotion was given to the Saints in the area. In addition their home was opened to the missionaries that traveled through. Their children, David, Jacob, Parley, Robert, Carl, Susie, Elizabeth, Ouida, Loretta and Mary Jane grew and waxed strong in the gospel and through their parents' example served with devotion in callings as they developed and matured. Some of their neighbors and church members living within walking distance



**John Jackson Blackwelder**, presiding elder at Oak Grove for over 20 years, with **Glenn Nettles**, a successor.

were: the Wes Williams, Henry Nettles, John Keenes, George Williams, Murphys, Hunters, Knights, Theodore Brannens, Joseph Brannens, the Douglas family, the Regars, Clemons, Dicks, John Nettles, Bagleys, Hendersons, Hammons, Stansels, Waters, Durens, Smiths, Gaskins, Shaws, Winninghams, Kerce, Crofts, Renfroes, Parrishs, Luther Thomas family, the Hardens, Tomlinsons, Swillys, Wilford Jordan family, Robert Cox, Shaws, Moore, Charlie Roberts, Tuckers, Smiths, Crofts and Cox.

Ouida remembers being told about one whole LDS family who died from pellagra and is buried at Oak Grove Cemetery adjoining the chapel. The graves are unmarked and the family name forgotten.

Ouida was born on a very cold February 4, 1921 morning and only weighed about four and a half pounds at birth. She was the eighth child and third daughter in her family. Her paternal grandmother, Nancy Nettles Blackwelder, a devout Freewill Baptist member, delivered her. At the same time, on their farm, their mare had her colt and they called him Tramp. He lived to be very old, Ouida remembers. In reminiscing about her family in Oak Grove, she says they came very near moving away at one time.

"In 1920 my dad and three oldest brothers went to St. Petersburg, Florida, and bought a dairy. I don't remember how big or how many cows on the dairy, but they had to hand milk them. It was during this time that things were beginning to look up financially for my folks, although it was short-lived. My dad sent my mother tickets to St. Petersburg. My mother had never been on a train before. She boarded at Lulu with four children and no money. At Palatka she had to change trains and there was an hour's wait. During this time, Mama lost her ticket for the last half of the trip. As Mama frantically searched for the lost ticket, she prayed for help as she had no money to buy more, so she relied

on Heavenly Father to help. She was about to give up when a man who looked to be in his middle thirties approached her and offered his help. She told him her problem and he offered to buy her ticket, which was two dollars, on to St. Petersburg which he did. Mama asked him for his name and address so she could send him the money back, but he only said, 'If you have a little girl, (Mama was in her seventh month), call her Ouida (We'da). He told her how to spell and pronounce it and wrote it on a piece of beautiful paper. When she looked up to thank him, he was gone, he just seemed to have completely vanished. So I was named Ouida. My mother always called me 'We-da', but my dad and others called me 'o' we-da, which isn't right. But my mother always believed he could have been an angel, and to this day I believe it too.

"The dairy didn't make enough money for all of us to live on so Daddy left the dairy in the hands of my brothers, packed his family up and he and Mother came back to Oak Grove and our home place where I was born. Our house was built in two phases. In 1903, Mama and Daddy were living in a small house in an area known as Old Bald Hill. Their oldest child, David, was born there. My Grandpa Peter Kerce had disowned Mama when she joined the Mormon Church and disinherited her, but because Mama had two sisters who joined later with their husbands, and because my father won my grandfather's love, Grandpa, a few months before my second brother Jacob was born gave Mama her dowry. Mama and Daddy were then able to enlarge their small home. The Elders, members of the Church, and our neighbors helped build a one-room log house with a big fireplace for Mama and Daddy. In those days they called them house raising. The chimney was made of wooden slabs with red clay from 'Old Bald Hill' and straw. The fireplace had an iron arm that would swing over the open fire that held a big iron pot that cooked many a pot of good vegetables or stews while sweet potatoes baked in the ashes. By the time my brother Parley was born in 1908, the house was a beauty.

"My first memory of Oak Grove was when I was about five years old. My dad was holding me and my three and a half year old sister, and we sang a song in sacrament meeting. Every night was family home evening at our home as we gathered around the dinner table in the summer and around the living room fireplace in the winter. We listened to our daddy make the Book of Mormon and Bible stories come alive. We had family prayer on our knees either in the kitchen or kneeling by the fireplace. Every morning we had family prayer around our big table.

"I remember President Charles A. Callis sitting across that table from us girls one Sunday (the boys sat on the

opposite side), and he was enjoying one of my mama's wonderful dinners. He called my dad and mama by name and said what beautiful girls we were and how pleased our Heavenly Father was with them. My mama was such a loving mother, the best, and I've really tried hard to follow her good example.

"When we were young girls, I remember riding to Oak Grove in a one-horse wagon. Mama always fixed a dinner for us to eat after Sunday School, then we rested a while before Sacrament Meeting started. On the way home we would lay on a quilt in the wagon bed and sing, our voices vibrating as we bumped over the dirt road. Our mama and daddy would sing with us too. What happy days we spent in Oak Grove with our family.

"I realized when I was growing up that my dad and mother were two great people that loved the Lord and their fellow man. I remember one time waking up late in the night to hear my mother crying. I was very young, but I knew something was very wrong. I was sleeping with my two sisters Susie and Beth, and Susie explained to me that a baby had died. She explained that Mama wasn't crying for the baby, because the baby had gone to live with Heavenly Father, but for the mother who was so lonely, not to have her baby to cuddle in her arms. That was my first experience with death.

"Our eating table was our place to hear Daddy and Mama teach us many gospel truths. We held hands around that wonderful old homemade table so many times I can see it in my mind's eye right now, listening in awe as my daddy gave many prayers in our behalf and for all the leaders of the Church.

"I can remember a big beautiful bouquet of white sticky flowers in the center of our table, especially in the spring. They smelled so good and they were called 'Fly Catchers'. I'm sure they had a more sophisticated name, but we called them that because flies were attracted to the flowers and would stick like glue to the white flowers.

"The only thing I ever remember having a screen in the house was our 'safe'. That's where we put our pies and cakes and big bowls of milk to clabber. Our mama used to make the best biscuits in the world, and I remember President Charles A. Callis saying so! The drinking milk was let down in the deep water well, in a big jar, to keep cool. We milked several cows every morning so we had fresh milk every day.

"I remember riding to Oak Grove Church when we got our brand new, one-horse wagon, a bright green one. Our old horse, Tramp, the one born the morning I was, was mighty proud to pull it. We learned the words to many church songs as we travelled back and forth to Church.



"The July 24th picnic was the special day of the year and we all got pretty new dresses. Mama sewed on the peddle Singer sewing machine. I can remember how tired mama's legs got so we girls took turn peddling the sewing machine by hand. We got new shoes, too. It was just a real dress up day. All the older ladies wore pretty wide brim hats. The picnic tables were brought from back of the church to the big oak tree. There must have been at least 25, 8 foot long tables and they were loaded with wonderful home cooked food. And there was always the 'preachin' and 'singin'. Poems were memorized and prizes were given to the one who gave the best poem. I once recited a long poem about the pioneers and got a \$5 gold coin. My sisters, Beth and Suzie, also won a \$5 gold piece one year.

"There were 'wood' heaters that warmed that old church in the winter, but in the summer the wooden window shutters were opened wide and nice card board fans with pretty pictures on them donated by the Wilson Funeral Home were available at the church for our use. The children were not allowed to play with them. Every few months, or more often in the summer time, the church grave yard (cemetery) was hoed and raked until not a blade of grass was left. All of the graves were left rounded on top by a small mound of soil and were decorated with lots of pretty sea shells and all kinds of little ornaments that had to be removed and washed. The pretty things were placed back very carefully and respectfully on the grave. While this was going on a team of people scrubbed the church floors and all the benches with lye soap and white sand brought from the 'sink hole' until they were golden in color and smelled so good!

"The 'old Rock Hole' was the baptism font and that's where most every one was baptized, including all of us. The Rock Hole was about a quarter of a mile from the Church. The bank of the creek was steep and when we were baptized in that carame-colored cold water, we were well below ground level. I remember the July day I was baptized in 1929. The weather was very warm, but the water was cold. I remember walking up the creek bank to where my mama was waiting to wrap me in a nice warm flannel blanket. I'll never forget the feeling I had at that moment. I truly felt as if I was in the arms of an angel. Then we walked back to the church where I was confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by my father. My life at Oak Grove contained some of the happiest moments, days and years of my life, and I'll always be thankful for the beautiful memories I have.

"Some of my most precious childhood memories are of my dad. Almost every night, especially in the winter, we sat around our fireplace listening to him read the

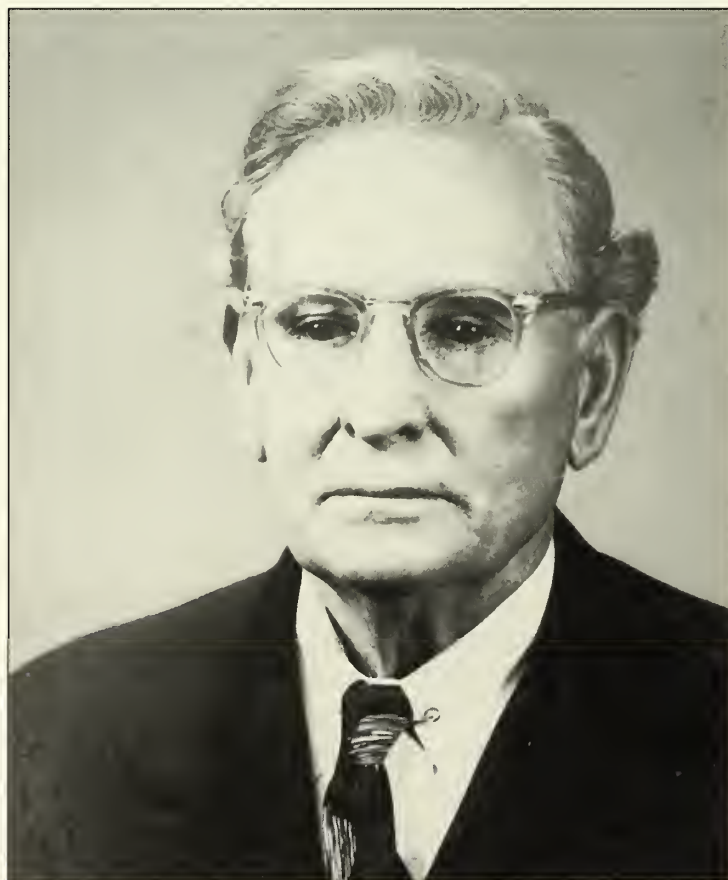
scriptures. As he read he had a way of making the scriptures 'come alive.' My sisters and I would pretend we were some of the women in the stories he would read to us, and many times we would lie on the grass in the warm summer days and look up in the sky and imagine we could see the things we had heard about floating by in the white fluffy clouds.

"I can still smell the bread my mother baked for the sacrament, and see her ever so tenderly and lovingly kneading the dough as she told us why we partake of the bread. She would tell us the story again and again of Jesus being nailed on the cross. It was so real and we understood so well what she told us and came to love Jesus so much for what He had done for us.

"I know through these experiences that the scriptures can come alive if we read and really study them. I'm sure if we truly pray as we read, they will 'come alive' and we will know our Lord in person when we meet Him face to face.

"I pause a minute to recall how many Saints from Oak Grove now dot this land of the United States of America. From California to Florida there are direct descendants of the Oak Grove pioneers. Many of them who hold responsible positions in stake and ward callings throughout our great country, got their start at Oak Grove, a place where they shared their testimonies that God lives, that Jesus Christ is His son, and Joseph Smith was and is a true prophet!"

*\* See related articles in Oak Grove Section*



**John Jackson 'Jack' Blackwelder**



## *DEAR CHILDREN OF ZION*

*Dear Children of Zion  
You are loved by God above  
And He is watching o'er you  
With unconditional love.  
When He sent you forth  
With a mission just for you  
He hoped with all His heart  
You'd be faithful and true.  
He watches from up above  
Where your footsteps lead  
And whether you are seeking truths  
And planting gospel seeds.  
He knows when you are happy  
He knows when things go wrong  
He knows if you are crying  
Or singing a beautiful song.  
Dear children of Zion  
March on to victory!  
You can live with Him again  
Through all eternity.*

*La Viece M. Smallwood*







Photo credit: Boone family illustration is by Craig Fetzer, and published first in the Ensign Magazine, July 1975, page 48. Used by permission.

# Once Upon a Lifetime AT CAMP BOONE

in Jacksonville, Florida

James Roland Boone and his wife the former Ruth Flake reared a remarkable family and created a remarkable legacy. They left a rich heritage for not only their posterity, but also for all who knew them, and for all who will yet come to know them through the example they lived.

Keeping the commandments, and striving to live daily by gospel standards was first nature to the Boone couple. By their strict adherence to the knowledge they gained from regular studying of the scriptures, and service in the Lord's Kingdom, the couple managed to do what few couples have mastered. Together they cultivated in each child the desire to be obedient to all they held dear and knew to be true. In spite of the rigid set of customs the family maintained to accomplish the seemingly impossible, there was fun and laughter in their household. They were exposed daily to model examples of gentleness, generosity and temperance by their parents.

Mother and Father Boone, as they were called, reared 14 children, 13 born to them and one adopted son. Seven sons arrived before their first daughter. In all there were eleven sons and three daughters that grew up in a century old farm house in an area of Jacksonville called Mandarin. For many years a fireplace was used for heat and a wood stove for preparing meals as the children grew up. Sister Boone once said, "We didn't have all the material things that sometimes seem so urgent, but we did have the things that really count."

The children, Flake, Coley, Frederick, Daniel, Joseph, George, Hyrum, Melinda, Martha, David, John, Ruth Elaine, Michael and Sammy all were given the



**Sister Ruth Flake,**  
*serving mission, early 1930's.*

middle name of Flake, Ruth's maiden name. She was a native of Snowflake Arizona and one of 24 children. Her mother, cousin to the Prophet Joseph Smith, was the 22nd of 44 children of one father who eventually had 235 grandchildren. Her three-story brick ancestral home in Arizona is one of the state's historic sites.

Her parents were among the settlers who crossed the Colorado River with her grandfather, William Flake, to colonize Arizona.

Ruth Flake met the handsome James Boone, a native of Glenville, Georgia, while serving a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Savannah, Georgia. They married in the Salt Lake Temple on September 30, 1937, and settled in Jacksonville, Florida, where he owned and operated Union Motors, a used car lot located on Phillips Highway.

The couple never wavered in their callings as parents or in Church service. Brother Boone was called in 1937 as the first Florida District President. Immediately following the first stake in the South to be organized in Jacksonville on January 19, 1947, he was called as patriarch and remained in that position until his death in 1987.

His companion, Ruth, preceded him in death in 1975. She served in the Florida Stake as Relief Society president for seven years until the stake was divided. She headed the newly formed Jacksonville Florida East Stake as Relief Society president for the next five years. She also labored for 25 years in the Primary Auxiliary and 20 years on the board of the Stake Relief Society. She also served as ward Relief Society president.

The story of the Boone family is a story of struggle and hard work. One of their sons once said, "The only reason there is any story to tell is because of our parents and their principles and goals. Without them there wouldn't be anything."

A daughter remarked once that, "Father and Mother's attitude of love and respect to each other made it a very natural thing to honor the priesthood. To me the offices and callings of the priesthood were just as natural as eating. I thought it was something every home was blessed to have."

Ten of the Boone's eleven sons attained the coveted title of Eagle Scout. Seven of the children attended college at the same time. Each Boone child graduated from



**Ruth Flake Boone  
and James R. Boone**  
*at reception in Snowflake, Arizona.*



college having paid his own way. Each child served the customary two-year term in missionary service to the Church, and none were ever known to have used alcohol or tobacco, coffee or tea, or any type of drugs. Rarely did the children ever miss a day of school or church. Many of them went to school 12 years without missing one day. A one hundred percent Church attendance record was rarely broken. All of the Boone children were taught to cook and sew and as each left home they took with them the skills of homemaking taught by their mother.

Family prayer was essential in the Boone home morning and night. When Brother Boone died, calluses were discovered on his knees from long hours of praying. The Boone children often tell how they would lie awake at night listening to their father pray vocally, always petitioning the Lord for blessings and aid for each of his children. They would not go to sleep until they had listened to what he had to say to the Lord in their behalf.

Ruth Flake Boone died in 1975 and was buried in her beloved Snow Flake, Az., among her pioneering ancestors. Following his death in 1987 at the age of 76, James Roland Boone was laid beside her. In addition to his children he was survived by his second wife, Kathleen Bennett Boone and 94 grandchildren. Today the Boone couple's children are scattered throughout the United States but faithfully hold regular reunions and keep in touch with an on-going newsletter.

Upon request, some of the now adult Boone children have submitted a few of their memories for this publication. Each one has written on a subject assigned by their brother, David, of Provo, Utah.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF OUR HOME:

By Michael Boone, Snow Flake, Arizona

The 12 x 12 pitch roof of our home was tin. The house itself was wood frame with 4x4 hand hewn heart wood. The downstairs was maybe 720 square feet and was sheeted inside with 1x. Outside was sheeted with 1x shiplap siding. The upstairs had exposed rafters. The kitchen, set apart from the house, for many years had a wood stove.

A fond memory was Father coming home carrying in all the children who met him at the gate, and always kissing mother first thing. I remember him reading a specially selected biography while Mother cooked the meal. Mother would read the Children's Friend to the younger children, and often the Relief Society magazine.

I remember special times on Sunday nights when we would eat sugar cane and oranges around the fire, and at Christmas time everyone cracking pecans with hearth

bricks while someone read. I remember Mother cooking goodies for the missionaries, especially her golden bars, fruit cake and divinity.

Saturday night baths were a reality. On cold days the younger children bathed in a wash tub before the fireplace in the living room. Water was heated in the two big pots (Fred and Alice still have the heavy cast aluminum one) or in a wash tub. The toilet had no tank and flushed with a bucket filled from the faucet in the big long tub (Fred has) up on clawlike/ball legs.

The fair size kitchen was separated from the main house by a wood plank dog trot of approximately 6-7 feet. There was running water in the single sink but was not heated. We used a kettle to heat water on the stove for dishes and cooking.

There was a wood stove that stood in the corner of the kitchen. Later a kerosene stove for cooking. It had unbalanced burners, pretty flames, but black pots. There were a few explosions lighting the oven that resulted in hair singed. Later it was replaced by a gas stove.

The kitchen also had two large, 33 gallon metal galvanized garbage cans that were Mother's flour bins. One held plain flour for her yeast breads and the other self-rising. There was a 'big' refrigerator, and a smaller one.

## BOONE FAMILY HOME EVENINGS

By George Boone, Snow Flake, Arizona

This was a special day for young Boones. Father would come home early for our version of 'Family Home Evening'. We often had missionaries over for supper which was wonderful and to participate in our softball game. Softball was the game of choice probably because even the little ones could find a place in the field. Father was usually the pitcher and we played workup or scrub as we called it. The little guys always had a friend to show them mercy until we grew large enough to hit past the pitcher. Father would often make several false throws to allow time for a little one to have a chance. It was a great lesson in mercy and compassion, not always appreciated by the older ones but extending far beyond our little game.

While ball games were the most regular activity during summer months we took trips to the lake which meant Strickland's Landing where they did not serve alcohol as their competitors did. The water was very clear and the lake bottom was smooth, sandy and free from roots, holes and other dangers. Our parents seemed to have had a fear of losing their children through drowning and we seldom went to the ocean. These trips were always accompanied by a generous meal and we even had a tradition for sugar daddies (candy). As we went home from the lake we made a stop at Green

Cove Springs for a soda.

Winter activities were different and usually centered around the fireplace. After a delicious meal prepared by our Mother, we enjoyed 'chewing' sugar cane. Father peeled it and cut it to size for the chewer. Only a few of us could chew the knots. Other winter treats were oranges which grew on the trees around the house. Father would say, 'Boys, do you think you could find a few oranges,' and despite the thorns among the branches, picking sometimes in the darkness wasn't too great an obstacle. We would eat a grocery sack full in an evening. Father would quarter them for everyone. It is amazing that he could keep up. Other times we ate pecans. We shelled them and watched the pretty colored flames as the oily shells burned. At times we shelled for Mother to bake pecans pies or cookies. We sometimes enjoyed peanuts and less often candy.

Father kept a journal for many years. It was in a place where no one touched it and this same spot was also where the 'chullets' were stored. They were butter-scotch balls and a particular family favorite.

One of the special treats was for the missionaries to visit. It is probable that they enjoyed it as much as we did. They always had a good meal and always an appreciative audience. They joined right in with our activities and were always welcome. This was an encouragement for our mission services, both for us wanting to go and knowing how to serve. Father would answer questions for them and strengthen them along with us.

Many activities stand out in our 'home nights'. The most outstanding part of any home evening may have been that Father came home early. We were always required to participate by reciting a poem, giving a report on a book, telling a story, and if we couldn't think of anything we may get to sing a song. We could sit where we wanted as long as we didn't fall asleep or get distracted. One of the special treats was Mother's part. She would read the missionary letters. She wrote one every week to each missionary and made it a point to help us feel the missionary spirit in this way. Father always found a way to teach the gospel. He might select a current event from the paper or a particular touching story about pioneers. He often selected stories of Church leaders and shared his insights. These were our 'lessons'. We had a book and kept minutes of our home evenings. One of the things that we did was to keep track of how many times we did the same part. Our Family Home Evenings were copied from Grandfather Flake's tradition.

Father and Mother were equally yoked. They loved the Lord first, each other and family. They made a conscious effort to teach gospel principles in their daily conversation. They also lived and loved what they taught.

Mother would read to us as children and the love for good literature and poetry has stayed with us. Father would read and talk to Mother and they strengthened each other in their trials. Prayer was an every day event in our home. We prayed regularly as a family. In the evening when the call came, 'All in', we knew to hurry in for prayer. All of us had a chance to pray which gave our parents a chance to look into our souls to see what nurturing we needed. Our parents had enough faith in prayer to pray with each of us as we returned home from dates and other activities at night. This provided a tempering effect on our conduct. End

## 1,900 MILES TO SNOW FLAKE

By Flake Boone, Snow Flake, Arizona

The story goes that Mother was promised a trip home to Snowflake every time she had a baby. Though she lived a long time in Florida, Snowflake was home. I remember a trip on the train when Fred was a baby and sick all the way. In 1946, when I was eight, I remember snow on the ground shortly before Grandpa Flake's passing. Ossie Boone drove our family out West once. We used large big heavy, strong cars to travel in. We filled in like rocks, the bigger ones on bottom and smaller ones fitted in wherever rear window and floor. We ate and slept on the fly (move), washed diapers and dried them out the window. We were always well received. We'd bring fire crackers which all of our cousins loved. They got special privileges to play with us by not doing regular work, or we did the work with them like branding cattle, harvesting and storing grain. We were turned loose to have fun. Our uncles would call off work and it was party time. It seemed to us that life in Snowflake was all fun with games, rodeos, horses, canyon exploring and picnics, cook outs, dances, etc. Many good times. Mother was highly loved and we were treated great. End.



**Ruth Flake Boone**

## SABBATH DAY OBSERVANCE

By John Boone, Snow Flake, Arizona

In November 1956 a new church building was dedicated at 4087 Hendricks Avenue on the south side of Jacksonville which was much closer to where we lived. Previous to that time we attended at the Park and Copeland chapel. Michael was a few weeks from being born at the time so very few of the younger children



remember that first location.

One Sunday morning those of us who were of Aaronic priesthood age would ride with Wells Meeks to our Aaronic priesthood meeting at Park and Copeland. Without Father around we had interesting experiences. Besides the brick ledge to walk around the church building, there was Walgreens Drug Store for treats. (In earlier days there was little said, or preached, about shopping on Sunday). The church was located near a place called Five Points. The buildings there also had some high beams for us to walk on forwards, backwards, and blind folded trying to out do one another. We enjoyed the park only a few blocks from the church on the St. Johns River with relatively tame squirrels and ducks which got a lot of exercise on Sunday mornings. The park also had a fountain with coins which helped provide treats at Walgreens.

After our transfer to the Hendricks Avenue building the older children remember Bishop Jenkins providing a car and \$5 for the boys to purchase Sacrament bread and the change was ours to support Coley Walker Drug Store. The Drug Store was off limits but bread purchasing was still traditional in the hour or two between priesthood meeting and Sunday School which was divided into Junior and Senior Sunday School. The Sacrament was blessed and passed at both meetings and if there was a shortage of young men, one of us might be called upon to do double duty.

After Sunday School we usually had a large meal, then naps, or scripture reading which was usually from the Book of Mormon. Sometimes we took walks while Father and Mother slept. To be honest the walks were often whatever the young minds came up with for diversion, but needed to be far enough away in the woods not to wake Father. One Sunday John was 'resting' on his bed directly upstairs from where Father and Mother were resting. He was experimenting on how much of a fuse of a fire cracker he could burn and still pinch it out. One got too close and a thumb over the fire cracker muffled the explosion sufficiently to avoid an explosion. It resulted in several minutes of holding his breath and a very sore thumb having blood under the nail. It is not accurate to say we always went around looking for ways to break the Sabbath, but the exceptions from usual strict behavior are more easily remembered.

The youngest three boys, David, John and Michael (probably following a tradition passed down from older brothers) got in the habit of sneaking out to the cabin on Fast Sunday where the food storage was kept and testing the cans of peaches to make sure they were still good. Bread and sandwiches were also smuggled in the car so a fast could be broken fast or promptly. Getting wind of the infraction Father took the boys down by the creek

and set them on a log and taught them about the purpose of the fast and accompanying blessings. Their desires were changed and in a much more meaningful and lasting way than the leather lesson given. (A leather belt was often used to jog the memory and inspire improved performance.) Father seemed much more experienced and able in the administering leather lessons.

In later years when we occasionally had a television that worked, we enjoyed a Disney movie on Sunday night, but Father usually preferred to read one of his hundreds of good books.

In earlier days stake conference was held in a least two sessions on Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 2-4 p.m. with a dinner break. But the best Sunday of the year was when ward conference was held and after Sunday School we had dinner on the grounds. It probably violated the spirit of not laboring on the Sabbath and the Word of Wisdom in amounts consumed. It was awesome and those sisters did their best which was fantastic. There just aren't words to describe how good it was. We were disappointed if we didn't get some of Mother's banana pudding as she was a great cook.

Before the new stake center was built on Hendricks Avenue we met for stake conference in several other locations such as the Riverside Woman's Club, the Jewish Center and George Washington Hotel. With the building of the Hendricks Avenue chapel, second ward was created which covered all of the southside. The ward had responsibilities for St. Augustine, a dependant branch, at that time. Many of us remember assignments to care for the sacrament and sometimes to speak in the small branch that met in the smoke saturated Odd Fellows Hall.

To illustrate how we should learn from those who go before we share this story. Several boys, probably Daniel, Joseph, George and Hyrum were distracted on their Sunday walk when they found a ball. Soon they were applying that ball for the purpose for which it was created in the large ball field behind the house. Father, on discovering their form of 'going on a walk' called them in and taught softly, rather than with loud leather and a lesson was learned at least for awhile. If the leather had been applied perhaps the lessons would have been better passed on to the little ones, but apparently it didn't have sufficient impact. One Sunday the younger children, David, John, Michael and probably Martha and Elaine (and possibly Melinda, interrupted their walk for a small softball game on a cloudy Sunday. Less than discrete they chose the small field between the house and road. Father, on discovering this, called them in and in a less harsh that expected manner again taught the purpose of the Sabbath and suggested more appropriate activities. Suddenly a lightning bolt struck between the house and

road on or near our small field. Although unproved, we maintained this exclamation mark struck home plate and to my knowledge organized ball was never played again on the Sabbath.

Though the Sabbath was not always strictly observed, it was strictly taught, and a powerful example given by Father and Mother which has helped us gain a love and respect for this Holy Day. (Father forgive us for we knew not what we did). End.

## FOOD:

By Elaine Boone Muhlestein

Having a father born and raised in the South, and a mother born and raised in the West, the Boone family ate food from both regions of the country and enjoyed it all. Even though not everyone liked everything, we did learn to eat what we were given and be grateful for it. Considering the number of mouths there were to feed and the size of the owners of those mouths, our family went through vast amounts of food. It still amazes me that Mother could feed so many so economically. She knew how to provide healthy, appetizing food in great quantities. She also knew when to get it and where to get it and I am sure that is how she managed so well for so long.

**GARDEN:** Each year we raised a large (over an acre) garden. Through the summer months and into the fall we ate a lot of fresh vegetables that we raised. To make us children more interested, we were each given a row in the garden in which we could plant anything we chose with the understanding that we then would do our share towards the family garden.

**MARKET:** In addition to what we could grow ourselves, Mother often went to the Farmers' Market to obtain food in bulk both for immediate consumption and to preserve for later use. One of the things I loved to get at the 'market' was an entire stalk of bananas and hang it in our kitchen. Many of the farmers knew mother by sight so when she came they would bargain with her and especially if they had very ripe produce they knew that she would buy a lot and make it profitable for both of them. When she bought bushels of beans and peas, we knew that snapping or shelling was coming up. To make it easier, we would all sit around working while one person would read to us and then we would trade off so that the work seemed to go faster.

**BEEF:** One of the things that we did was raise our own beef. Actually we had milk cows to provide milk and butter and cream and when they would calve we would either raise a new milker or raise beef for the family. Butchering time was an event when on a cool morning we would all turn out early in the morning to dress out

the beef and then look forward to fresh beef for breakfast afterward. We didn't eat a lot of meat but Mother could make whatever she fixed as tender and delicious as anyone could desire. We would sometimes freeze some meat but most of it went to the canning kitchen and came home as 'canned beef' which was used for meals in the months ahead.

**FISH:** Since Father was raised on the Altamaha River and spent his early working life fishing, he liked fish and consequently we all enjoyed eating fish. Whenever we went to Georgia, we would always bring back fresh fish and there were places in Jacksonville that Father would buy fish to bring home. I remember many nights where Father would bring home a big washtub or more full of fish and we would scale and clean the fish knowing that there would be fresh fish for breakfast and maybe even another meal or two. Mother knew just how to cook them and even though she was not brought up on fish, she ate them as well.

**MILK:** Having our own cows and usually milking at least two at any given time, we nearly always had gallons of fresh whole milk to drink. We could usually drink all we wanted any time we wanted it. Milking and caring for the animals was a big part of the daily chores that needed to be done. We were taught that the animals were fed before we ate and so morning and evening there was milking to be done. The boys usually did the milking though each girl had her turn at it as well. The girls generally were responsible for straining and taking care of the milk when it came to the house. Mother loved to make butter and buttermilk for Father and we all learned how to make butter. Whenever there was a surplus of milk she would make cottage cheese and nearly always kept some clabber for Father. There was always cream that could be skimmed off the milk if we needed it for something, otherwise it was just stirred into the milk and we drank it.

**CHICKENS:** We raised chickens and used them for meat as well as the eggs they produced. Many a Sunday dinner was running around on Saturday in the yard. The younger children were usually responsible for gathering the eggs and finding nests that the hens would hide. In the spring we would get a new batch of chicks and know that we would have more to eat and more to lay. We ate chicken fairly regularly and had it prepared many ways: fried, baked, boiled or in a pot of rice. The day that Joseph returned from his mission to England, he arrived home late at night. Mother asked him what he would like for breakfast and his answer was fried chicken. Before day the next morning she had a chicken dressed and in the frying pan for when he woke up.

**GROCERY STORES:** Mother had her favorite places to buy certain things. She knew which store had the best



kind of a certain food. She would buy cases of foods when they were on sale and then not buy that item again for some time. She would then use whatever we had plenty of to feed the family. She bought flour and sugar in large quantities and rarely ran out of those and other staples.

**BREAD:** Father liked to have bread with every meal and he did not like store bought bread. Mother made whole wheat bread about twice a week and about twelve loaves at a time. We loved to come home from school to find bread hot from the oven. On Saturdays when it was time to eat and the bread wasn't quite ready to bake, we sometimes got to have scones which was a treat. For breakfast Mother would make baking power biscuits or hoe cake and on special occasions maybe a coffee cake. On the day she made bread she might make a baking tray or two of rolls for that night. She made white bread some but mostly it was wheat from the wheat she ground herself. She made good cornbread and hoe cake even though those were unknown to her growing up. I remember when I would take a lunch somewhere and I would try to hide the fact that my sandwich was on thick slices of homemade bread when everyone around me had those even slices of bread. Now I would give about anything for someone to make me a sandwich on good homemade bread. Mother was always asked to bring bread or rolls to church dinners or bazaars, and there was never any left to take back home. I guess with plenty of good bread and good milk to fill any cracks, it made it easier to fill us all up. Mother would often give a loaf of bread to one of the neighbors or some ward member that needed to be remembered. I remember many times being asked to take a loaf of bread down to so and so just because it was hot out of the oven.

**DESSERTS:** We didn't have dessert often but they were worth the wait. In the summer we would make a big freezer of homemade ice cream that would be the perfect ending to Family Home Evening. Banana pudding was always a treat and still is whenever we get together. Mother knew that Father just loved fresh berries and so we would all go out and pick buckets of blackberries, dewberries or huckleberries and Mother would make wonderful cobblers and pies. Peaches and ice cream or strawberries and ice cream were great and if Mother just happened to have one of her pound cakes freshly made to go with it, so much the better. She also made banana cake and spice cake and even her busy day cake. Especially at Christmas she made sweet breads for us and the neighbors. Her Swedish Tea Rings were a favorite. I can't remember any thing she ever made going to waste. A family favorite was 'Golden Bar' which was a very sweet little cookie bar made with butter and brown sugar. Her pies were out of this world. When we did

something especially good or helpful we were awarded a good girl or good boy credit mark which when accumulated were rewarded with a pie of our own. Lemon meringue was maybe Mother's specialty although apple, pecan and many others were enjoyed as well.

**BREAKFAST:** Breakfast at our house was unlike what any of my friends had. We ate farm breakfasts with the idea that it was the most important meal of the day and that if you had been up and done your chores, you were hungry. We often ate oatmeal or whole wheat cereal but after we ate the cereal we might have bacon and eggs, or biscuits, or pancakes, or waffles, or something else. Being one of the family that had a difficult time with hot cereal, I loved the days that we might get grits and eggs, or rice and gravy, or grits and fish, or anything but cereal. The day I left home for college, Mother made rice and canned beef for breakfast and didn't even make me eat cereal. She must have loved me, too. Sunday was a different story. That was the day that we ate 'little' breakfasts. That was the only time we ate 'prepared' cereal, the kind you buy from the store in a box. And even then we didn't get the sweetened kind, we had cheerios or corn flakes. Also on Sunday we would have 'Egg on Toast' which is eggs poached in milk and then spooned over toasted bread.

**SATURDAY AND SUNDAY:** We generally ate our big meal early in the afternoon. Consequently, the evening meals were smaller and less formal. Not that any meal at our house was very formal, it just meant we didn't fix a full meal. Sometimes we would have fruit and bread or maybe just a bowl of bread and milk. Sunday nights we might have a big bowl of jello and maybe crackers and peanut butter, or bread and cheese. Also, Sunday night was the night when Father served out a favorite treat during the winter months.

**BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAYS:** Each year we were asked what we would like for our birthday dinner. A favorite was often fried chicken and potatoes and gravy or maybe roast beef and potatoes and gravy. If it was soon after we had slaughtered a beef we might ask for smothered fried steak. Mother tried hard to fix whatever meal we requested. Holidays were also made special. Thanksgiving was a traditional turkey dinner with all the trimmings. We would cook for days making pies and cranberry sauce and salads getting ready. Christmas was a similarly big and wonderful meal. On Christmas morning we could not eat anything out of our stocking until after we had eaten the big breakfast that was on the table. After a family game of basketball, we were all ready for the feast on Christmas afternoon. Christmas dinner was often turkey but duck or goose were also on the menu at times. At Christmas a family tradition was the fruitcake that we made. Mother found a recipe years ago

for an ice box fruitcake that needs no baking. The longer it stays in the refrigerator the better it gets and that was a treat to all.

**MISSIONARY BOXES:** In conjunction with Christmas, Mother always sent out a 'care' package to the missionaries. It might include some new socks or a new white shirt but the real box was the goodies. Mother made wonderful candies. She knew how to make nougat centers for rolled candies, divinity, nut clusters, caramels, taffy and fondants. She would send golden bar and fruitcake and anything else she could think of. I remember as each of my brothers left for their mission those of us at home got to help prepare the boxes to be sent. As a little girl, my job was to put my finger on the string while the knots were tied, but I graduated to wrapping and sorting and filling the boxes. Mother did the cooking for those Christmas boxes herself, I suppose she wanted to be sure that what went in the box was done right. I remember all eleven of my older siblings being on their missions and sending them boxes. By the time I was a missionary, Mother was gone. After my last Christmas in the field, I wrote something of my feelings of having missed out on a family tradition in a letter to Martha. A few weeks later, which was actually just a short time before I came home, I received a box from Martha with all the 'right things' that missionaries got in boxes. When Samuel went to England, I made sure that he too had the opportunity to get his very own Christmas Box.

**COOKING:** When I was young Mother still cooked on a wood stove. I remember the older boys being responsible to chop the wood in the correct size sticks to fit into the stove, and then they would stack it outside the kitchen. Even the youngest of us were sent out for sticks of firewood. When we got a stove it was easier to regulate temperatures and even though Mother could handle the wood stove, we younger cooks fared much better with burners that turned on and off. Mother rarely used a 9x13 pan for anything because it just wasn't big enough, but she had her 'cake pans' which were basically twice the size so when we made anything we just doubled the recipe. Her cooking pots were larger than average as well. She had a heavy cast iron pot that probably held about 15-16 quarts of food. This she used daily. She had another that was a lighter weight aluminum pot that she used to boil potatoes or greens or things that wouldn't stick to the bottom. Our 'rice pot' would hold 21 cups of cooked rice and then she had various other cast iron skillets and frying pans that she used for different things.

**EATING:** Meal time provided physical challenges in having a place for everyone to eat. My earliest memories of the table were the children down through Martha sit-

ting at the table. David and John sat at the tin top table (a cabinet above a tin working surface that was along the wall), while Michael and I shared an old wooden high chair that folded down to lay along the floor and provided table and chair surfaces. As we outgrew that chair, additional places were set along the sideboard table tops for us. The older nine children and Father and Mother sat at the table with chairs on three sides and a bench along the back of the table. Benches allow more bodies to be put in the same space so there were various numbers of people assigned to the bench depending on their size. Also, Martha was left-handed so she usually was put on a corner so she didn't elbow others. As each of the older boys left home, a new place opened up at the table and in order of age we moved up to the big table. Mother always sat at the west end of the table and Father always sat just around the corner on the south side. Sometimes a child was on the corner between them, but their places never moved. Mornings were a time that food was served in shifts but evenings when possible and Sundays and holidays were full family meals. Mother made a hot breakfast for the early morning Seminary students and then everyone thereafter as well. Supper was served to as many as were there when Father arrived home and the others either before or after. For the most part, we were expected to be there with the family.

**LUNCH:** Mother would pack a lunch for Father and whichever of the children went with him to work. This was usually leftovers with bread and milk. Those at home had leftovers or cold fruit or tomatoes with bread and butter or soup or sandwiches. The school goers had homemade lunches for years where the bread would be laid out in long rows and the sandwiches massed produced. In later years, Mother decided that a hot noon lunch would be better so we started buying school lunches.

## HOME FOOD STORAGE (and other special memories)

By Martha Boone Checketts

Mother made weekly trips to the Farmers' Market on Beaver Street in Jacksonville from our home on Sunbeam Road in Mandarin. She knew the vendors and would work her way down the rows until she found the best deal on the produce she wanted before making her purchases. Ofttimes she would go around closing time when a tired seller was willing to let his last few bushels of something go for a lower price so he could head home.

Potatoes came in bags of 50-100 pounds. Bananas were sometimes purchased as whole stalks and then hung on a nail in our kitchen from a beam across the width of the room. Mother would purchase bushels of green



beans, pole, bush, Kentucky Wonders, black-eyes and field peas, butter beans, etc., and the hulls must not be fed to the cows for fear the pointed ends might stick in their throats.

Tomatoes were an important part of our storage and diets, but mother was not very successful in raising them, though she repeatedly attempted to do so. We ate canned tomatoes with bread and butter for our lunch in the summer time. Our big home garden was disked each year by Brother Jonnie Fussell, one of Mother's grown Primary boys and we grew corn, potatoes beans and peas. Our smaller garden yielded a few vegetables and many flowers. We often dug it with a shovel and it became a calf pen in between times. Our pear tree was there and an old tall oak that yielded great mistletoe. I remember the year the okra did so well and grew so tall. It was fun to play hide-and-seek in.

But most of our produce was not produced by us. Mother knew the little stands to find things like greens that were an important part of our diet. The washing of them was no fun for Father could too easily find any sand that we might miss.

Mother grew up in Snow Flake eating turnips but their pigs ate the tops. Her mission to the South prepared her to use the resources available to feed us and she 'cleaned up' some of the greasy, heavy foods and did admirably. She always wanted to be an elementary school teacher but gave up that dream to raise a family. As a daughter who had the opportunity to become a teacher of Home Economics, I felt that she depended on common sense and the Lord to help her feed us balanced meals on a budget. The more I learned in books about nutrition, the more I marveled. So it was with child rearing that my formal education in no way approximated what she taught, what she learned by the Spirit, what she lived.

We put some things up at home using the open kettle method where we cooked the food and poured it into sterile, hot jars, which usually sealed. The canning center, provided by the county, was so much better for canning large quantities. We paid only for the cans and lids. I remember doing 4-6 bushels of such things as tomatoes, peaches or applesauce in a day.

The cans, some quarts, some gallons and smaller ones for preserves, etc., were often left processing in their huge hot water tubs overnight at the canning center. Someone went back for them the following day with a check from our Father's business, Union Motors. We drove through the pasture/ball field, to the storage cabin and unloaded them. The cabin had once been an old three room store, purchased by Father and set up on cement blocks back beyond the gardens and the red and yellow tool house sheds. The 'big' boys slept there in the

summer. The chickens rested under it, nested in it, rat snakes and rats ate eggs under it. (George would wait hours with his 22 for the rats.) Dogs and children chased chickens under it to ready the birds for the cooking pot. The cabin provided storage for the cow's feed, purchased in croaker/gunny sacks, and cotton feed bags (that sometimes served as material for quilt blocks, shirts, pillow cases, bed spreads, and dish towels, as well as used to teach the children to sew a straight line on Mother's little Monarch sewing machine.

Now the storage program of the Church is identified as basic, emergency, and expanded storage. We had basic wheat, in 55 gallon drums. We had hand grinders, ordered through The Improvement Era that cracked it for cereal and ground it a second time somewhat fine for bread. Oh, wonderful day when A & P upgraded their coffee grinding system and we became owners of a very heavy grinder, I believe via the Floyd Kelly family.

When the wheat came via railroad, thousands of pounds in bags were brought into the cultural hall to fill orders all over the stake. We put dry ice in the bottom of the barrels and left them open over night with the wheat on top to allow the gas to kill any bugs before closing up the barrels for storage. It was a challenge to tip over full barrels and open small openings to extract wheat when we needed it. Sometimes it got spilled and if it got wet we saw wheat sprouts growing for the chickens to rejoice. What was sad for our family was to be called to remove wheat from member's garages where wheat had been improperly stored, used and rotated, so it became bug infested and unfit for human consumption. Our cows and chickens enjoyed it immensely.

When friends and neighbors would call and offer fruits and vegetables that they had grown tired of harvesting and preserving, we would go with buckets, pans, bushels baskets and climb and pick. Then home to peel, process and preserve. Mother had a lot of children to feed, to help work, and to train.

I remember that Melinda taught me to dip vanilla wafers and peeled bananas into the thickest part of the cream from our milk undetected. Daniel taught me to make 'milk shakes' with sugar and vanilla flavoring and milk shaken in a jar and drunk from the jar after dark out behind one of the big cedar trees in the front yard, near the fence. I believe it was Coley who taught me to milk with him when I was four, and to stick out my tongue for a fresh squirt of warm milk from the cow as we worked. I still have the ability and have passed it on to succeeding generations, for better or worse for I'm doing it now. David said that Father and Mother made a decision early in their marriage to eat simple, but nourishing food. We had that!

I was left handed and Father taught me to shake

milk in a jar to make butter right-handed. One evening as Father came home from work and I was shaking away, he mentioned my left hand on the lid. He watched with his experienced eye and saw butter starting to form, then he showed me how to do it right-handed and sure enough, it came right away, right-handed. The twinkle in his eye reassured me that I hadn't done anything wrong and there was a feeling of something more but I didn't understand until later his 'lesson'.

Once the land on which we lived had been an extensive orange grove, but killing freezes and ice storms depleted the bearing trees. The trees with bitter sour fruit were hardy. They had evidently not been grafted to bear desirable fruit. But even so they were fragrant in blossom and their marble sized oranges made great sling shot ammo on trips to Georgia for family reunions.

One winter the crop of oranges was frozen so we hurriedly picked them and made juice which was canned at the canning center. That was a means of saving the food but not one of our favorite canning ventures. The orange juice was not the best. An even worse canned product was gallons of vegetable soup. Something about the potatoes was less than palatable and we were grateful when the last can had been dutifully eaten.

Gallon cans, sealed with only air, made good floats in the barrow pit the neighbors allowed us to use for our swimming and fishing hole.

Once we dumped some fruit from old jars and left for our cow and chickens. It made the cow act strange. Michael recognized the symptoms as he'd recently seen on his mission among the Navajo Indians, and accurately diagnosed her as drunk. She was and we were assured it was temporary. The cows were considered part of our storage and could survive on grass. All of our ten acres there was not fenced, but there was lots of potential for feed and grain. We usually killed a beef in the winter, a steer from our milk cows. On a cold Saturday morning we'd cut palmettos, get wash tubs with cold water and some knives ready. As I was older, I'd wait until the animal was shot so I didn't have to watch our pet die. It then became beef, not Daffy or Penrod. (But I welcomed cans of Penelope as such to my college diet.) We ate the liver for breakfast, brains with scrambled eggs was pretty good. The tripe went to Ethel, the Black woman down the road, who ironed for us. She would clean a little for Father and use the rest for her family. We took great portions to the canning kitchen and from that mother would make great soups, ground meat, and stew meat from it.

We had trouble with hawks, coons, possums and owls attacking our chickens. Mother kept her flash light right by her bed (and you didn't take it without permission nor forget to return it without consequences).

Many stories circulate among us of her defending her chickens with 2x4, her 22 rifle, etc. At times we had a chicken pen but roosting in trees seemed the safest place at nights for the birds. Helping mother dress them became one of my chores. I enjoyed helping her get a couple of fat hens ready on Saturday and it's been a useful skill for a farmer's wife.

Mother tested recipes for either Betty Crocker or General Mills. They'd send her the recipe and we'd usually enjoy the results. I'm sad to report that I put her mail away one October when she went out to General Relief Society Conference and she didn't find the letter in time to make the recipe. I think similar things had happened before but I was the cause of the last strike and she was out.

After our mother died in 1975 several of the glass jars containing food she had preserved were salvaged and many of the jars are still in the family.

## MEMORIES:

By Sammy Boone

I feel that I have been blessed with an excellent memory of my childhood. I remember my mother, Ruth Boone, although she died when I was four years old. I remember being at my Father's car lot. My parents were looking over a station wagon which I believe we took on a trip stopping in Texas to see my brother John who was there as a missionary, and on to Snowflake, Az., my mother's hometown. My mother, Ruth, passed away when I was four. My father married Kathleen Bennett. Kathleen has been my Mother who raised me. My father enjoyed traveling and after he retired we did quite a bit of it. Immediately after he retired we visited all of my brothers and sisters. As we traveled to Alaska to see Joseph, we stopped and saw the Temple in Carlston, Alberta. As we traveled we often incorporated visiting Church sites into our travels.

One of the highlights of my youth was when I was 12. We went to the Atlanta Temple dedication. Along with the opportunity to attend the dedication of the temple, I also was able to meet and visit with President Thomas S. Monson. President Monson's memory amazed me, as it did again when I spoke with him a year ago, and he had a vivid recollection of our visit 13 years prior.

My father was a powerful man physically. I enjoyed playing ball, and even at times boxing with him. He took me to Kingsley Lake where he taught me to swim. As a family we would sometimes go to the county fair, and the circus when they would come to town.

Our home was one with a strong spiritual foundation. I remember at a very early age I had an under-



standing of principles that years later I realized much of the world's population didn't even begin to grasp. When Mother passed away, John was the one to come and tell me. I do not remember this, but the response he told me I gave was something to the effect of, "It's ok, the angels will fix her and send her back."

Before I was old enough to read, my father used to read from the Bible to me. As I learned to read my reading skills were sharpened with family study of the Book of Mormon.

I had a wonderful relationship with my Father. I was blessed to be there in the later years of his life when he had more time to share with me.

I was 16 years old when it was discovered my Father had cancer. I decided this was the time to receive my patriarchal blessing from him. I am glad I did as shortly thereafter his health began to deteriorate.

I have been greatly blessed to be a son of James R. Boone. All my life he has been a great influence on me. He was truly an incredible man. He is my model for greatness. The attributes that made my Father were self discipline, service, and studying the gospel continually. As a result he was blessed with wisdom. He is truly one who endured to the end. Even now as I live in Utah, I am surprised at how many people I meet who knew and admired him. End



**Ruth and James Boone, 1973**

*Photo was taken at home of Vince & La Viece Smallwood, Jacksonville, FL*

## The Threefold Mission of the Church as Exemplified in the life of James R. Boone

By David F. Boone

James Roland Boone entered mortality on 11 April 1911 in Glenville, Tatnall County (southeastern) Georgia. His birth was a difficult one and probably because of the difficulty he was the last of his parents' children. In recounting the experiences of his birth his mother remembered.

"When Jim was born, there was something happened I never got over. (He was between 12-13 lbs. at birth). I was sick for a day and a night in labor before he was born. I was in real misery." (EMP p.54)  
Of his childhood his mother remarked:

"Jim was headstrong, my gracious he was! I set up some steel traps and every morning he would beat me (to them) and get his hands caught. Two mornings on a straight he got his fingers caught and the third morning he started running I told him if he got caught again I would whip him. He did and I gave him a good whipping and he didn't do it anymore." (Ibid., p56)

Perhaps, this personality trait of independence more than most other elements characterized his life in the view of those who knew him. Throughout his life the Gospel played an integral part of his existence.

The restored gospel was introduced to his mother's family before he was born. His uncle Dowse (Dow) was baptized in 1902 and his mother, Eliza Malinda Padgett Flowers, a recent widow, heard the missionaries preach in the area near her home. She believed what they taught but scarcely dared to join with the fledgling sect because she believed that by so doing she would be breaking with her family (JRB Interview, Oct. 1978). After hearing the last verse of the familiar Latter-day hymn, We Thank Thee Oh God for a Prophet,

We'll sing of his goodness and mercy,  
We'll praise him by day and by night,  
Rejoice in His glorious gospel,  
And bask in His life giving light  
Thus on to eternal perfection  
The honest and faithful will go.  
While those who reject this glad message  
Shall never such happiness know!

(Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, published by the Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1985,p19)

She said when she heard that stanza she 'trembled like a leaf' and recognized that she dare not reject the message. She was baptized on 25 July 1904 by Elder Arnaldus. "I thought I was breaking with my family (she was 32 years old) by being baptized but I went ahead anyway because I didn't know when the Elders would come back....I had made up my mind to be a Mormon regardless of what the people said" (EMP. Hist. pp. 30-31). Consequently other family members followed her example. Throughout the rest of her life she was devoted to the gospel as were her children. Ultimately her future husband, Columbus Napoleon Boone (married 28 May 1905) was also baptized.

As a youth, little was available for James R. Boone by



**James R. Boone**

*Servicemen Coordinator for Georgia, Florida, Mississippi and Alabama during World War II for LDS Church*

way of a church organization for the family to be involved in. Prior to his mission, my father, (James R.) indicated he only attended an LDS Church a few times and one of those was a social function. Without a ward, branch or even more basic organization like a Sunday School available, the only organized participation in the Church took place at home. Despite his lack of Church involvement, he said of his Church participation, "In my childhood....I always felt that I was a member of and belonged to the Church."

While growing up the children had access to the Improvement Era and the *Liahona: The Elder's Journal* to which their mother subscribed for their gospel training. In addition, the family read the scriptures, both ancient and the restoration scriptures. Sometimes they read together but mostly individually. Scriptures were readily available and discussed in the home. Other early reading for father included the biography of Elder Wilford Woodruff who became something of a hero to James R. especially in his missionary labors. Years later father's journal was largely patterned after the notations of the Church president's journal entries. However, the highlight and significant focus of the family's religious experiences was the periodic visits of the full time proselyting missionaries.

"We didn't have an over-abundance of religion, (practiced in the home) but there was prayer by the indi-

viduals. When the missionaries came they called on us and we had family prayer together...We did talk about right and wrong, and I am sure I knew better than I did all my life. But early in life I commenced in teens, trying to keep the commandments diligently" (Interview, July 27, 1981, p.12).

The Elders usually came twice a year for a place of refuge, as there was significant opposition to them or to their message. They came to rest, recuperate, study, to have their clothes mended and cleaned, but especially to eat good wholesome food and to preach the Gospel. When the Elders came, extended family and neighbors were invited over to hear the gospel preached. These were memorable experiences and the visit of the Elders was a pivotal point in the gospel education of Brother Boone. Not only was it an early source of gospel instruction but it also set an example for his own missionary service that was to later change the entire direction and destiny of his life. His call to full-time missionary service is a chapter separate from the present topic but it was the means of his moving from Georgia to Florida and the beginning of his personal ministry and his emphasis of building up of the Church. During his more than four years of missionary service he was presided over by two men who later became members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Both Presidents Charles A. Callis and LeGrand Richards had a significant impact on his personal life as will be seen hereafter.

Late in his mission, President Richards originally gave his permission to another extension and then withdrew his permission for him to stay longer in the mission, feeling that it was advisable for his 25-year-old Elder to get on with his life. President Richards counseled Elder Boone not to return to his homeland but rather to go to build up the Church somewhere in the South. Elder Boone was in a quandary. If he was not to return to his own home, where was he to go? Elder Richards suggested three possibilities. "If you move to Savannah, Georgia, or Charleston, South Carolina," he said, "I will make you District President. But if you go to Jacksonville, Florida, I can make no promises." Father thought on the possibilities and determined in his own mind that he would go to Jacksonville. He suggested that once he made the decision he stopped at a service station and went into the restroom to pray for a spiritual confirmation. "My bosom began to burn..." The Florida District was organized in April 1937 and James R. Boone was made the first District President.

Father hitchhiked to Salt Lake City, Utah, in September 1937 shortly after his missionary release to marry the former Sister Ruth Flake of Snowflake, Arizona. When he arrived he had the traditional prospective father-in-law interview. Elder Boone knew



something of the pioneer heritage of the Flake family and knew of their Priesthood orientation. During the interview the hopeful groom mentioned the names of his two previous mission presidents, Elder Callis and President LeGrand Richards who could vouch for him, his character and his reputation as a missionary. His future father-in-law both surprised him and taught him a valuable lesson about family when he responded, "I don't care what they (mission presidents) think, I am concerned with what my daughter thinks!" Well, his daughter had had a spiritual confirmation about the marriage and on 27 September 1937 they were married for all eternity in the Salt Lake Temple.

After a honeymoon, which included a visit to her childhood home in Snowflake, Arizona, the newlyweds settled in Jacksonville for a brief time before business opportunities took them to Orlando. Later, they were transferred back to the Jacksonville area and there they remained for the bulk of their lives.

## EMPLOYMENT

Although I never recall having heard the idea verbalized, the impression I personally always had was that father believed he was sent to Florida by those in Priesthood authority and there he would stay until they sent him elsewhere. There were times when my parents considered moving elsewhere, more out of financial need, but they always determined if they would exercise sufficient faith all would be well, and somehow or other it always seemed to work out that way. One instance concerning finances and livelihood that affected Father's philosophy in service in the Church occurred after years of meagerness. He was apparently offered a job with one of the major shipyards in town. He needed the money, yearned for the security, and wanted to be an adequate provider for his growing family. He prayed over the matter until a dream of the night resolved the problem.

In the dream he saw himself prospering, dressed nicely, in an executive position with the aforementioned company. But he also saw himself having to work on Sundays. He saw his priesthood brethren meeting without him and he saw his own sons elsewhere besides their appointed meetings. Further, he also saw his family poor and ultimately he chose between the two extremes. Upon awakening, he decided that any success he could gain in financial matters was not worth the cost to his family in spiritual things and he turned down the offer.

Not related to this experience was his very conscious decision that if he worked for others he would be bound by what others needed and wanted him to do. So, despite the financial trade-offs of being employed by someone else, security, benefits, etc., that went with it, he decided to remain self-employed and ran a used car

business on Phillips Highway in south Jacksonville until his retirement. In doing so, he explained, when someone called needing a Priesthood blessing, or needed him to preach a funeral, he was free to go. Further when he felt compelled to go do genealogical research or to otherwise serve, he was able to leave his business to attend to it. And go he did! I remember Father locking up his office and taking the family to the Pioneer Day celebration at Oak Grove, when no one was available to look after his business for him. Further, I have heard stories about him being pressed by the spirit to seek after his kindred dead and he would walk away from his business for days at a time in pursuit of their salvation. Not as often as he would have liked, he left home, sometimes with family and sometime without to attend the great General Conference of the Church. These opportunities, no doubt, would not have been available to him had he been otherwise employed.

He made a conscious effort to avoid tying himself down with temporal things so that he could be involved in the higher spiritual blessings. There were sacrifices but it is hard in retrospect to see where, how or when we as a family were deprived. On the other hand, there have been numerous valuable blessings to suggest he made the correct choices.

## FLORIDA DISTRICT

His ability and desire to serve were recognized early when he was called to preside in the District Presidency. Ironically, in the one geographical area where leadership could not be guaranteed by President Richards as a missionary was the very place and calling he received. He traveled extensively in Florida and South Georgia among the fledgling and sometimes struggling Church branches. He met with, trained, encouraged and taught the local leaders, not that he had any particular training but only experience from mission authorities and Church leaders and the companionship of the spirit to resolve issues. Other than brief visits to the West he had never lived in a stake or in other than an organized district.

Invariably his leadership was in leading the several branches to adopt and implement the Church programs in an area that had not known them before. Great credit must also be given to the pioneer leaders of the several branches throughout the district, to those who served in district assignments and especially to their wives and families. The great majority of early Church leaders in what would later become the Florida Stake had also never lived in, much less served in an organized Church ward or stake prior to their calling. They were dedicated to Church growth and all we can do today is stand back in awe at what God hath wrought through the service of so many early dedicated servants.

In addition to his District labors, Father was also asked to serve as a LDS Serviceman's Coordinator during the waning years of World War II. This service took him all over the southeast, often many days at a time, to visit military installations, encampments, servicemen's groups and to report his progress to Church's infant Serviceman's Committee. Usually in this capacity he traveled by railroad or bus whereas his district assignment was normally by automobile; either his own or another; share a ride or hitchhiking.

## FLORIDA STAKE

Perhaps one of the spin-off effects of his tenure as Serviceman's Coordinator and as District President was his association with and coming to the attention of some of the general church leaders. In addition to the nomination process that frequently occurs in Church reorganizations this may have been one way in which he was known by and had the confidence of the general Church leaders as the northern Florida area neared stakehood.

The hope of stakehood was an active dream for many years before it became a reality both as it pertained to the General Authorities and to the pioneering members in the South. According to Elder LeGrand Richards whose father Elder George F. Richards was the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the idea of a stake in Florida was born several years before the organization was actually realized.

Several obstacles that prevented an earlier organization included the indecision on potential leadership in Florida, the illness of select members of the Quorum of the Twelve which required a postponement of plans, and being distracted by the general business of the Church in many other areas of responsibility.

The problem of selecting specific leaders had no reflection on individuals who were later called nor on any others. The problem centered around the dilemma that nothing like this organization had been affected in the Church before. In earlier organizations, individuals who had grown up in organized stakes in the West were transplanted to be used to preside in the new outlying organizations. Examples include stake organizations in Arizona, California, Chicago, Illinois, Washington, D.C., etc. Almost invariably the leaders of these new stakes were being raised in stakes and consequently they knew the local operations of the Church.

In the organization of the Florida Stake no such experience was available. In fact, of the original Florida Stake leadership, only one, first counselor E. Coleman Madsen, a Utah native, had ever lived, other than visits, in a regularly organized Church unit.

Father noted in his extensive journal that during the latter months of 1946 it was known that something was

happening toward a Stake organization because boxes of books were delivered to him as the District President. These were handbooks, instruction manuals, curriculum supplies, etc., that were necessary to staff all of the positions of a new stake. There was great excitement over the prospects and an immense gratitude that the blessings of being a stake would soon be available to this here-to-fore remote region of the Church.

When the date of the conference drew near the excitement increased as also did the realization of the responsibility of the step that was being taken. There were meetings for training, many questions to be answered, instructions, encouragement and direction.

On the day of the organization, Father recorded in his journal for Sunday, 19 January 1947, "I have seen a dream of years come true!" Further he recorded, "Elder Lee told me my labors as coordinator and District President were highly accepted." This assurance from the Apostle came in answer to a specific prayer earlier that day but not in the way he had either requested or expected. He had prayed for an assurance that his services over the past several years had been acceptable. The specific nature of the answer could not be questioned and was much encouraged by the apostle's comments. During the conference 1,047 members attended to witness the creation of the 163rd stake of the Church and the first of the US in the southeast.

## DEATH OF ELDER CALLIS

Monday morning again found Priesthood leaders assembled for another four hours of meetings to receive instruction and training under the direction of Elders Charles A. Callis and Harold B. Lee. By 8:00 a.m. the following day, (Tuesday, 21 Jan.) Elder Lee had left Jacksonville for southern Florida and Elder Callis was dead.

Special permission was obtained by the new stake leaders from the Church's First Presidency to hold a funeral in Jacksonville before the body was returned west for another service and final burial. Father recorded, "It was the most unusual funeral service I have attended. Elder Lee presided and conducted the services." (Elder Lee was alerted to the death of Elder Callis by the Florida Highway Patrol while en route to Miami.) In the funeral, "he attempted to read a telegram from the Church's First Presidency (occasioned by the death of Elder Callis) but emotion overcame him and he gave it to Heber Meeks (the Mission President) to read. Later, Elder Lee again spoke, this time in mighty power. He said, "Elder Callis was ready to go...and that this (his death) would sanctify the stake like the death of the Prophet Joseph (Smith) did the Church!" (James R. Boone Journal, Tuesday, 21 Jan 1947). Elder Lee echoed



comments that President Callis had made during the days of stake organization and had prophesied, "that there will be many stakes and a temple here in the South."

The Saints loved Elder Callis and many remembered him in his role as Mission President when he presided over the mission or before when he presided over the Florida Conference. He was well-loved, sorely missed, highly honored and thereby a permanent fixture in the loyalty of the Southern Saints.

#### **PATRIARCHAL OFFICE**

Within two months of the stake organization another apostle, Elder Ezra Taft Benson was in Jacksonville for the Florida Stake's first quarterly conference. Elder Benson interviewed Father and then asked him if there was any reason why he could not get close to the Lord. Finally, after a very searching interview Elder Benson advised him that his name would be presented to the Stake as the Stake Patriarch. He was further told that he was the youngest patriarch in the Church. (JRB Interview, Oct 2, 1978)

In the ordination and setting apart Elder Benson promised him that he would have, "power to read the hearts of men, (to) declare their lineage and to bless them." He further directed, "Always take time to consult with (the) applicant before the blessing, you are to bless not counsel as a spiritual adviser." (JRB Journal, 16 Mar 1947)

This counsel is included here because of the number of saints in the southeast who were blessed under his hand. Many will recognize that he took seriously the counsel to take time to consult with the applicant. He served as an ordained Patriarch in Florida from March 1947 until his death in December 1987. He gave in excess of 1500 blessings during this portion of his ministry, enough, he said, to fill the Stake Center on Hendricks Avenue where he and his family had attended through the years.

His practice was to prepare himself physically, spiritually and emotionally for these blessings. Until very late in his life he always fasted for these blessings and he prayed about his responsibility to bless the Saints. Prior to the blessing he would bathe, put on clean clothing: his very best, wash his hands, clean his nails and groom himself in preparation for the occasion. These became occasions to be anticipated for him. They were occasions when, "tears flowed freely and when the spirit manifested itself in great abundance." (JRB Funeral, Snowflake p. 5)

Ironically, a single regret from among all the blessings he participated in was a blessing that he didn't give. He shared the circumstances in his own words.

"I want to tell you one regret. One night I was beat;

I had a long day, from before day until after dark. We lived ten miles or more from town. The Stake President brought some young people out (to the house) for a Patriarchal Blessing. It must have been nine or ninety-three and I was so tired I could hardly go. I declined giving them a blessing. I never saw them again. I don't remember the fifteen hundred or so blessings that were pronounced but I remember those that weren't pronounced. It is a source of displeasure when you fail to do, and I hope that he has forgiven me, and that they have forgiven me and that it will be well with me, but I don't want any more thoughts like those." (Talk to Family, October 1987, p. 2).

#### **FAMILY HISTORY and TEMPLE WORK**

In addition to his service as patriarch he was consistently involved in the service of his kindred dead. Beginning in his early married and family years and continuing throughout his life he had a drive and determination to provide for the salvation of his progenitors. He would leave home, with the support of his eternal companion, for days at a time, without money in his pocket and none to leave with his family and hitchhike throughout the South in search for the names of his ancestors. Of his ancestry he said,

"I am proud of my progenitors. Never did I realize in my young manhood the greatness of my people. I knew my father and mother were remarkable people, but...I could not comprehend, and I am satisfied still do not comprehend their greatness, but I love them." (Interview, 17 August 1982, p. 10).

At times with only a referral of someone who had information he would hitchhike, walk or drive to their home to interview them to find out what they knew. As new leads presented themselves, he would likewise follow up on them. Several times a week he would go to the branch genealogical library to further his research and to continue his voluminous correspondence. When connections were made, and research completed he filled out name submission sheets and was ultimately responsible for the completion of temple ordinances for more than enough people to fill the Salt Lake Tabernacle to overflowing (approximately 9,000). He said,

"I have done genealogical research over many lines pushing them back to the eighth and ninth centuries in some areas and our royal lines." (Interview, 17 Aug. 1982, p. 10). Of this important work of the salvation of God's children, my father bore witness.

"I testify to you in the name of Israel's God, whose children we are, that a man or a woman cannot enter into his exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom of God, save he (or she) receive the testimony of Jesus Christ, and receives all of His holy ordinances: baptism, confirma-

tion, the Holy Priesthood, the endowment at God's house and the fullness thereof (viz) sealing by the Holy Spirit of Promise, His commandments, every law and every ordinance which God has revealed for the children of men to receive — must be received in life or death if they would inherit their glory in the kingdom of our God."

## MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

During the time that father was so completely engrossed in his missionary service, he gave little thought to marriage and family. He had thought about it considerably before his mission and had enough money saved to buy land and to pay for the building of a large comfortable house, but he accepted a mission call instead. The promise he had made with the Lord was if the Lord would reveal to his (father's) satisfaction that a mission is what he should do he promised to devote all of his earnings in that pursuit. Father received the necessary assurance and consequently spent more than four years in missionary service.

Not only did the Lord provide experiences, growth opportunities and spiritual maturation for his hard earned and consecrated dollars but ultimately He also provided him with a wife. Father left the mission field in 1935 with the permission of his president, and he hitchhiked to Salt Lake City where he received his temple endowments and also his patriarchal blessing. On the way back he stopped at some of the Church's significant historical sites including Nauvoo and Carthage, Illinois. At one of the visitor centers he left his missionary card.

Months later a released sister missionary saw the card, recognized the name and wrote him. In the meantime back in the Southern States Mission, Elder James R. Boone sought for permission from his mission president, LeGrand Richards, to stay one additional year in the mission field. This was given and the Elder went about his work. Consequently, Sister Richards expressed her feeling to her husband that she was not sure that the 'Brethren' would concur with the additional extension for the Elder and suggested that he should probably be sent home to marry, begin a family and get on with his life.

President Richards saw the wisdom of her position and when he saw the Elder again expressed the feeling that Elder Boone should be released, get married, etc. The Elder had been in the mission field for approximately four and one-half years and expressed the concern that he didn't know who to marry. President Richards proposed some names of eligible ladies which father remembered writing on an envelope he had in his pocket. Further, the Mission President assisted by taking the

recently released Elder with him to the conferences held in the areas where the ladies lived so that he could meet them without raising any suspicion about his motives. Through the succeeding weeks he systematically crossed off each of the names and returned to the President for additional recommendations.

A second list was given and one of the names on the second occasion was the name of Sister Ruth Flake. Elder Boone knew Sister Flake, heard her speak, was impressed by her heritage and devotion to the Priesthood. He thought more about her as a recommendation until he determined to write her.

In the process of events as Sister Flake departed from her missionary service, she saw his missionary card in the Visitor's Center at Carthage, Ill. and determined to write to the previous Elder and thank him, and the District, for a party of farewell that the missionaries had held in her honor. He was impressed with the gesture but not distracted by the fact until the events of encouragement from his mission president began to unfold. Over several weeks he pondered the proposition of taking a wife and then like his earlier experiences he prayed for confirmation of the Spirit and received it.

Next he sent a letter of proposal to Ruth Flake in Snowflake, Arizona, and then waited for her reply. Ironically, at least two witnesses could verify that Sister Flake had confided to them prior to her departure from the mission field, that the Spirit had born witness to her that she would marry Elder Boone. One of the two was a local Saint who remained a dear friend of the family throughout their lives and the other confidant was Sister Ina Richards. What part being privy to this information had in the counsel she gave to her husband about Elder Boone's release is not known but it can be reasoned that it was a viable factor.

Sister Flake's previous knowledge of these facts was important because her letter of acceptance to his proposal returned more quickly than he expected. She answered in the words of the great Moabitish woman, Ruth, for whom she was named. Quoting from the book of Ruth: "...Wither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

Her answer likewise proved prophetic because she was committing herself to leave her people to live the remainder of her life in a land foreign to her birth and home but not to her heritage. Through the years Mother won the respect and the love of the sisters in the South and she loved them too.

In a family gathering speaking to his son's request for information on their 'courtship' and referring to our mother he said, "Boys, I was some kind of a proud fellow! When I saw the long line of people coming in to



greet us (at a reception), I thought I had hit it rich" (JRB Dictation, Oct. 6, 1985). And we believed he always did. In formal poses, informal snapshots and professional studios he would invariably look at Mother rather than the camera. On more than one occasion a photographer became exasperated at his unwillingness to cooperate and look at the camera, he wanted to look at his sweetheart and told them so.

Certainly, Father and Mother had differences, perhaps those differences even erupted into words of emotions but it was not a very common occurrence. It was so uncommon, in fact, that once when it did happen one of the youngest children expressed the concern that it meant the end to all the children held precious.

In 1994 when the Orlando Temple was dedicated the author was honored to travel to Florida to represent his deceased parents at this momentous occasion. While there he met several of the visiting authorities who had known them personally and who had been in their home and respected them. Elder Faust greeted me and said, while shaking my hand, "I remember a lesson your father taught me. Any righteous man and woman can make a marriage work if they will only live the gospel." Father and Mother seem to be the proof of that statement. They came from vastly different backgrounds, different economic circumstances, diverse societal and cultural beginnings but they both cherished the gospel, honored the Priesthood, and loved the Lord and so despite other differences they made it work.

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### *IF YOU COULD.....*

*If the human eye could see,  
Above the clouds to infinity  
Another place would come to view  
T'wd be eternity.  
If you could gaze upon that world  
With streets of gold, lined with pearl  
You'd surely want to enter there  
Where all is well and all is fair.  
You'd want to taste the honey sweet  
And eat some manna as a treat  
And sing the songs that reign above  
Where there is unconditional love.*

*La Viece M. Smallwood*



Seated Left to Right: Michael, Ruth Elaine, Melinda, James & Ruth Boone, Martha & John  
Standing Left to Right: David, Hyrum, George, Joseph, Daniel, Frederick, Coley & Flake





*Rosa Lee Terrell Brooks*

# ROSA LEE TERRELL BROOKS

Baker/Union and Duval County, Florida

*The following story was recorded by Rosa Lee Terrell Brooks' family before her death, and published in a book A Dream Fulfilled compiled by her granddaughters, Billie M. Wyckoff and Barbara L. Bradham. Its pages are filled with lively, heartwarming stories of her life, but only excerpts concerning the background of the earliest converts to the Church by her family are included here.*

Of my grandparents I know very little. My father's people came to America from England in the year of 1635 and settled in Orange County, Virginia. Then some of those Terrell's came down to North Carolina, on to South Carolina, finally settling in Liberty County, Georgia. My father's parents were slave owners and their plantation was located in Sherman's line of march to the sea.

There in Liberty County my father, James Richard David Batey Fleming Terrell, was born in 1852. After the war there was not much left of the once beautiful estate, but it was there that my father grew to young manhood amid the faithful slaves who refused their freedom. His father, John Terrell, died when James was seven years old, leaving my grandmother, Celia Elizabeth Delk Terrell, with two young sons to rear. All she had to help her in this undertaking was the land and a few of the faithful slaves.

My father's brother, Uncle William, being a very delicate child, passed from this life at the early age of thirteen. This left my father to carry on as head of the house. But not liking this humdrum life of the farm, Father later took up saw milling. This took him all over the southern part of Georgia. On one of these trips he met my mother, Nancy Elizabeth Lane, who was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. Then and there he resolved to make her his wife. This he did. They were married January 17, 1871. To this union there were born several children, of whom five lived to rear families of their own. Two were stillborn babies.

My mother was born and reared in Ware County, Georgia, and was the daughter of Daniel Lane and Nancy Elizabeth Warren. It was there in Ware County that she married my father, and after they were married, she rode horseback beside him to Liberty County, Georgia. There they began their life on the once beautiful plantation.

Within a year they lost a beautiful baby girl. But life goes on, and a year later another little girl came to bless their home. This one they named Celia Elizabeth, in honor of my father's mother who made her home with them. My sister was called 'Sallie', a nick name that

stuck with her through life.

Then in the year 1875, another baby girl was born. They gave her the name of Mary Florence. She was Grandmother Terrell's favorite grandchild.

In 1877, the pride and joy of my mother's heart came to make his home with her. They named him James Daniel. He was a very delicate child and required a great deal of Mother's time. By now Mother was a very busy woman. She had to oversee the work on the farm and care for her family as well, for Papa was away a great deal of the time looking after his lumber business. They were never too busy, however, to welcome a new baby into their house. So in 1879 my sister Adrene was born. Not long after this, in December of 1883, Grandmother Celia Elizabeth Terrell died. To my father this was a great sorrow — one he never entirely overcame. He then became dissatisfied and longed to move to Florida.

In the year 1884, he sold the old home plantation to his Aunt Susan Dukes and moved to Florida. This did not bring the peace and satisfaction he hoped for, so he was soon on the move again, this time settling in Bradford County, Florida. At this time they lost a beautiful baby boy. This was another great disappointment to my parents.

I was born on a bright sunny day late in October, on the twenty-fifth day in 1888. Dr. Berry was in attendance. I came into the world nine years later than my sister Adrena Razora, whose birthday is October 17th. I was the youngest of the seven children born to my parents.

My parents were two of the finest people that ever lived. They were born and raised in the day when people believed in the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." This was their motto. They firmly believed that honesty was the best policy and in explaining that I was never to even so much as pick up a pin in anybody's house without first asking permission. They always taught us not to be wasteful. I have heard my Father say many times, "Wilful waste makes woeful want." Not a crumb of any food were we allowed to waste.

We were not blessed with too much of this world's goods, but we had enough for a good comfortable home in the country. My mother gave all of her children a featherbed made of the feathers from her geese.

One Saturday afternoon, Papa came home from town and told Mama he had heard of a new religion. Two young men were in town, and he had talked to them for a few minutes. He had liked what they said, and they told him they were going to speak at Hicks school house the next day.

Mama, being a good Methodist, said to Papa, "We



don't need a new religion. All we need is to live the one we have."

But Papa said, "Nevertheless I am going to hear what they have to say."

The next afternoon when they arrived at the school house, there was a sign on the door saying, 'you enter here at the risk of your life. Read Mormons and run.'

There were about six or seven men and the two Mormon Elders there at that time. Among those gathered there were, Mr. W.D. Mann, my father, and others. Mr. Mann said, "Well, fellows, come with me. I have room and I would like to hear what you have to say." So that was the first meeting held in that little community by the Mormons. This was three miles east of Sanderson. Some years later, one of the first branches of the Church was organized there.

Mr. Mann had a large family, and they lived in Sanderson. I want to say that they were one of the choice families of our Heavenly Father's children. Especially this was the case with their daughter Kate. I loved her so very much. She was my best girlfriend in my childhood. Later she married Mr. Melrose. We remained fast friends until she passed away.

My father joined the Church on January 6, 1898. My mother joined the Church two years later on May 6, 1900. My brother, James Daniel, was next on June 15, 1900. He was endowed on August 25, 1905, and filled a three-year mission in Virginia. There he met a nice girl, just 13 years of age at the time. He came home after his mission, then returned five years later to Virginia and married her. Her name was Mary Henshaw.

On November 21, 1900, I was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I know it is the true Church and all who wish to know if the teachings of this Church are true can know by living the teachings of the Church.

My oldest sister, Sallie, and the next sister, Florence, were baptized on the same day, April 13, 1901. Sister Florence was a school teacher and she had read awful things about the Mormons. When she heard that Father was about to join the Mormon Church she came home to set him straight. The first Sunday she was at home Papa invited her to go to Church with him. She said she would be glad to go. When the speaker arose to give his sermon, she sat spellbound as he spoke on the three degrees of glory. For when she was a small child, Papa's mother had told Sister Florence a dream which she had had. Grandmother Terrell had seen in this dream three different places in heaven. She (Sister Florence) became interested and after joining, was a devoted member and remained faithful all her long life. She passed away on May 30, 1956. She was the wife of Charles Furman Harvin and the mother of four children; Elise, Jim, Ben

and Edward.

I grew up in the piney woods of Baker County, attending high school in Macclenny, Florida. Our professor was Mr. Bell.

Then in 1904 I met and married Robert Lee Brooks in Bradford County, now Union County. We became the parents of six children: James Ervin Lockwood Brooks, Ethel Jewel, Edith Louise, Alice and Camilus (Mickey).

I want to thank my Heavenly Father for those wonderful parents of mine. They gave me love and taught me the love of the gospel and helped me to gain a testimony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This testimony I value above all earthly possessions.

The posterity of Rosa Lee Terrell Brooks have served as missionaries, bishops, bishop's counselors, high councilmen, and in just about every capacity in the Church. Through their faithfulness in service to the gospel's growth in the South, this family has won the love and respect of countless people throughout the area.

*The following narratives of the Brooks/Terrell/McRae and related families are excerpts from the writings of Camilus 'Mickey' Brooks McRae, daughter of Robert and Rosa Lee Terrell Brooks. Their devoted and faithful labors have filled almost every aspect of service for the building up of Zion in the South.*

July 14, 1990: My testimony

When I was young it never occurred to me I'd ever get old. As I grew up, I saw my parents get old and eventually die. Now that I'm old and my children are grown and their children reaching maturity, I have many experiences and memories I can enjoy and recall with happiness for the most part.

I was blessed to be my mother's child. She was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at a young age. Her father had joined the Church a few years before in 1898.

In all my growing up years at Sanderson, Florida, I never knew her to do anything contrary to the teachings of the Latter-day Saint Church. We didn't live in a community where a church was until I was eight years old. My Dad, sister Alice, and I were baptized at the same time on May 25, 1925, in Trout River at Jacksonville, Florida. I was eight and a half years old.

As my mother lived her testimony of the gospel, it was a way of life in our home. I don't remember having Family Home evenings or even reading the Bible as a family, but the gospel was lived in the home in a loving and easy way that I thought all families were that way. It was only after I got married did I get mature enough to notice other families didn't seem to have the serenity of

our home.

We had trials, plenty of them, but there were peace, love and trust between my parents that made our life special. From this environment all six of us children were taught the scriptures and gospel doctrines that built our strong and lasting testimonies. All six of us were baptized.

I know now that the trials that my parents had were for all our benefit. We learned to do and make do, and take care of what we had to share with each other and those less fortunate than ourselves.

The wonderful gospel principles that tell me I am a Child of God, that He is indeed my Father and I came to this earth for a purpose and if that purpose is faithfully done, I'll return to His presence with all my loved ones to live forever with Him and His beloved Son, My Savior Jesus Christ is my testimony. Camilus Brooks McRae.

**James Richard  
David Batey  
Fleming Terrell,  
known as  
'Pickey Pa'  
Father of Rosa  
Lee Terrell  
Brooks**



### **JAMES RICHARD DAVID BATEY FLEMING TERRELL**

James Richard David Batey Fleming Terrell was the only grandparent I knew because all the others died before I had a chance to know them. We all owe so much to this great man. He was in a small community on business near Sanderson, Florida, one afternoon in 1898 when he heard some men preaching on the street corner. Some people had already stopped to listen so he also stopped for awhile. When he got home, he told Grandmother Nancy Elizabeth (Lane) he had heard a 'new religion' today. She said, 'We don't need a new religion. What we need is to live the one we have.' (This is because he liked a nip from a bottle now and then.) His reply was that a meeting was being held in the schoolhouse that night and he wanted to go hear what they had to say. She wouldn't go with him, so he went alone. It was dark when he got there and the schoolhouse was also dark. The people were gathered around outside and talking about what to do as there was a sign tacked to the door. It said, 'Mormons, if you value your life,—Do not enter.'

Of course no one entered. Also men with blackened faces holding lighter-knot torches were walking around the schoolhouse. A man by the name of Dan Mann said, "I just live down the road and I have a large enough place and you're welcome." They all went to Mr. Mann's house. He and all his large family joined the Church along with Grandpa Terrell and some others in 1898. In a couple of years, on May 6, 1900, Grandmother Terrell, Mama and Uncle Dan were baptized at Sanderson. Kate Mann became my mama's best friend.

Aunt Florence, Mama's sister, heard what Granddad had done, so she came home to set him straight as soon as she could. She, being very educated, just knew he had made a big mistake. She went to Church with him and the speaker spoke on the Three Degrees of Glory! She was shocked and couldn't believe her ears. Many years before, her Grandmother Celia Terrell had told Aunt Florence (Harvin) of a dream she had had, but didn't understand, yet the dream was very plain and real to her. When the speaker explained about the three degrees of Glory, she knew this was her grandmother's dream that, until now, they did not understand. She was converted to Mormonism that day.

Granddad Terrell was Sunday School Superintendent for 17 years at Oak Grove Church, near Lake Butler and Providence, Florida. He was also a Mason and attended their meetings as a young man. He was always faithful in the Church. I once heard a man, Giles Melvin, bear his testimony about my grandfather, many years after his death. Brother Melvin was along in years when he bore his testimony about the most honest man he ever knew. He said it was the time of year for farmers to sell their stock to market. They would run them into a truck. Brother Terrell would count nine pigs and hold back the 10th pig. When one would come through larger than the 10th he had held back for tithing, he'd swap the larger one for the smaller one to have the biggest and the best to pay his tithing with. This was a great thrill to me to hear this and after the meeting I went to Brother Melvin and told him that the Brother Terrell of whom he spoke was my grandfather. He told me he knew many many other stories about my grandfather's honesty.

Granddad was born in Liberty County, Georgia, on July 24, 1852. His mother's plantation was in the path of General Sherman's march through Georgia to the sea. He was a lad about 10 years old when riders came through telling them, 'The Yankees are coming!' This brought terror to their ears for they had heard the things the Yankee were doing to the people and their property. He and his mother took the cow and went away from the house into a hammock (a thick strand of trees) and put the cow in the water up to her knees to keep her quiet. They stayed three days and nights in terror



watching the Yankee steal their stock or kill what they couldn't use and burn down the house. The cow's udder would get full and she would 'low' in pain until they were so afraid the Yankee would hear her and find them and kill them.

When the Yankees left and they came out of the hammock, the house was gone and so was everything else. Grandmother's slaves had run away, but the caretaker's house still stood, so they lived there. Gradually, they were able to make a living. Granddaddy never got over that and hated a Yankee as long as he lived. All Mama's daughters married Georgia boys except for Alice. She married Lee S. Brimhall who was from Utah.

I remember one time I got a spanking because of Grandpa. We all called him by a nickname we gave him, 'Pickey-Paw.' I wasn't quite yet six and we lived at Saint Charles. He was visiting us at the time. I sassied him about something (by today's standards, it would be just general talk). Mama didn't like it and brushed my legs with a pine straw. I also got a spanking about that time for floating pine straws for boats on top of her rain barrel filled with water after she'd told me it was trash and not to do it. It didn't seem like trash to me, only boats floating on water.

After we moved to 2819 Fitzgerald Street in Jacksonville, Pickey-Paw stayed with us off and on. I remember him then as a blustery old man, sometimes very grumpy and fussy, that Mama humored. He would



**James Richard David Batey Fleming Terrell,**  
**age 40 in 1892**

*Buried in Olustee Cemetery, Union County, FL.*

get excited and go on about something, and we knew he was all bluster and no bite. Underneath he was a gentle man that loved people, and people loved him. As a child, I thought he had an irritating way though. He'd look out for the afternoon paper boy and get the paper when it'd come. Then he wouldn't divide it up and give me the funnies until he'd read the whole paper. He said we'd scatter it all around so he couldn't find what he was looking for.

To pass the time, he loved to play a card game we called Set-back. Usually I was his partner, and Alice and Charles North, from across the street, were the other partners. They had a system of signals worked out so they could tell each other what was in their hand. Naturally, they bid just right and would win. When Pickey-Paw caught on, he'd throw his cards on the table yelling, "I'll not play with cheaters. This is the end!" He'd be so mad and upset. By that afternoon, he'd be lonely and have nothing to do. He'd ask me if we could get up a little card game. Seemingly all was forgotten and we'd play again. He was a sweet old man with a heart of gold when I knew him. He got very sick in the fall of 1934 and Mama went out to Lake Butler and brought him to our house on Fitzgerald Street. We never knew for sure what was wrong with him, but he died December 3, 1934. He would talk of Nancy coming for him and about the Star of the East. I'm sure a loved one welcomed him home.

All in the family, who have accepted the Gospel, owe him a great debt of gratitude for his staunchness in the church and setting the way for all who have followed. Although he was only 81 when he passed away, he seemed very old to me at 17. He had a lot of snow white hair, medium build and was on the thin side with stooped shoulders.

Mama loved him dearly for she had always been his baby. His death was very hard on her. All of us had great respect for this great man.

## **REMEMBERING MY MOTHER ROSA LEE TERRELL BROOKS**

"Mama was like a star. She had her own light and she let it shine."

Mama was born in Bradford County, Florida, October 25, 1888. She was the youngest of five children who lived to be adults, nine years younger than her sister Adrena, born before her, so in a way it was almost like being an only child.

Mama's parents, James and Nancy Terrell lived in the country. She was only seven when her last sister to be married, Adrena, left home. She was lonesome and had

to find her own playmates. She told me about a spider that was her friend for a time. When she'd go where it lived, she would get down on her hands and knees and blow gently in its hole. She would call to it and the spider would run out. She'd pick it up and play with it for awhile, then put it back 'til the next time.

She remembers her mother sewing her dresses from material that her sister Florence, thirteen years older than her, would bring home. Aunt Florence was a school teacher and had a little income of her own so she always brought Mama presents when she visited. A child never forgets kindness and expressions of love given to them. Mama never forgot her sister's kindness.

Mama loved her only brother, James Daniel Terrell. She called him Buddy, and there was always a great bond between them. He stayed at home until he left for his mission. He was always good to take up time to play with her.

Mama was still nursing when she was five years old. When company would come and she wanted to nurse, she'd go behind a door to call her mother to come. Grandmother always knew what she wanted. One day when Aunt Florence was visiting, she asked Mama when she was going to stop nursing. She said she loved her sister so much and wanted to please her so she said, "I'll stop July 4th." This seemed very far away to her. She had no idea when it was, but she had heard the grown-ups talk about July 4th. Not long after, Aunt Florence was visiting and she asked Mama if she had stopped nursing. Mama told her, "No, but it isn't July 4th, yet." Aunt Florence said, "Oh, but today is July 4th." Mama said that she didn't believe her so she ran home to get the truth from Grandma. When she asked her, Grandmother said, "Yes, today is the 4th of July." Then Mama knew that was it — no more nursing. That night she turned and twisted and couldn't sleep or rest. Grandmother would beg her to just nurse a little to sleep, but Mama wouldn't do it, as she promised Aunt Florence she wouldn't again.

Mama said she was treated like a princess as a child by her mother. This, she thought, must go back to the way her mother, Nancy Elizabeth Lane's step mother treated her. Grandmother Nancy's mother (who was also named Nancy Elizabeth ) died when she was only two, and her father, Daniel Lane, married a lady named Priscilla Pittman. She was cruel to Grandmother Nancy and her brother Archibald. When Archibald contracted a contagious childhood disease, she made him stay in the smokehouse. It was cold wintertime and Grandmother Nancy stayed out there with him trying to keep him warm, but he caught pneumonia and died. This was a great tragedy in her life. I know Mama loved her mother so much she never spoke of her without her eyes misting

up. She died one day after a day of housecleaning and cooking while she was sitting on her front porch talking to her twelve-year-old grandson, Frank Sapp.



**Home of Nancy Elizabeth Lane Terrell, in Lake Butler.**  
*She died on the front porch while talking to her grandson, Frank Sapp.*

Mama graduated from the last grade of high school taught at that time in Baker County, Florida. That fall she acted as substitute teacher for one of her favorite teachers and boarded in town with friends of her parents. She was only 15 when she met Daddy.

#### MY DADDY: ROBERT LEE BROOKS

Daddy was sandy haired and fair skinned. He was born in June 4, 1882, the first child born to William Ervin and Celia Elizabeth Nettles Brooks in Union County. His father was a farmer and Rob never lost his love for the outdoors or the farm.

His mother was a gentle woman and a good farmer's wife. She lived by the rule, 'Do and Make Do.'

The family lived in meager circumstances by today's standards, but had about what all the other country people and farmers of the community had. His father was able to give each of his children ten acres of land and helped them build a house on it as they were married. My parents lived with him when they first married and my mother said of him, "He was the best man that ever wore shoe leather." Mama, just 15 years old, had been spoiled and sheltered as a child, so she learned many household skills from Rob's sister, Clara, when they lived with Rob's daddy while their house was being built.

Rob's mother, Celia, died when her son was only 21 years old. Rob loved her very much. He stayed home with his father while his brother Rance could attend Georgia Medical College and later Emory University. He was never able to complete the requirements for a medical degree. He married Beatrice Bielling and the children began coming along making it impossible to continue school. Rance disappeared in the early 20's and



was never heard from again. He left three little children that my parents kept for awhile. His sister, Clara Bielling, died in 1960 while visiting one of her sons in Texas. She had a bad heart like Rob. She was brought back home and buried in the little cemetery in Providence, Florida.

Daddy was six years older than Mama when he met her at a community dance. They liked each other right away. Daddy had musical talent and taught singing in high school. He played the fiddle at community dances. He played the harmonica and taught his oldest son, Lockwood, to play it too. But his best instrument was the guitar. As he played, he and Mama would sing songs like "The Red River Valley", "Baggage Coach Ahead" and "The Red Wing".

Grandpa Brooks died September 2, 1912, and he was never happy on the farm after that. He sold out and he and Mama settled in Jacksonville where their last child, which happened to be me, was born in 1916.

Daddy owned a four-chair barber shop on Riverside Avenue near the street car barn. Business was good but the hair irritated his eyes and he finally sold the business. We then moved to Van Sant Street and while there my Grandfather Terrell died. Daddy bought the old Adams place out Lem Turner in north Jacksonville, but it was wet land. So Daddy swapped it to his neighbor for 10 acres on Saint Charles Creek off the St. Johns River. We moved there in a borrowed truck on January 1, 1920. The roads were so deep-rutted a car would steer itself. It was a small, two-story house that was right on the bank of the river. We had three bedrooms, and the five girls slept in one of them. It was an old clapboard house with a breezeway between the bedrooms and the kitchen. That was a paradise for us kids, and we lived there almost five years until they closed the school at New Berlin, Florida. Daddy worked in town most of the time we lived there, coming home on weekends. Mama tended Daddy's garden, raised chickens and a cow. She made us homemade bread and was our doctor and nurse. She'd buy a bolt of homespun cloth and make all our underwear. Long into the night she sewed the dresses for her daughters. The older children rowed a boat up St. Charles to St. Johns River to New Berlin to attend a one room schoolhouse with 30 students and one teacher for all grades. They had no life preservers or motor for the row boat back then. One of the regular family outings was to row across the St. Johns River to Goat Island, now called Blount Island, with two big washtubs in the boat. The children would fill the tubs with white, salt-laden sand from the island and row it back home. Mother would scatter it on our pine floor in the kitchen and leave it there. In a few days she would sweep it up and it would leave a clean, white-bleached wood floor.



***Robert Lee Brooks, circa 28 years old.***

We children had no toys but played with what nature provided, swimming in the clean river and tromping through the woods. We had wild animals as pets, including raccoons, baby alligators, rabbits and squirrels. Daddy built a dock out over the water where we all learned to swim. Crab, shrimp, fish and wild game supplemented our family's diet of fresh or home-canned vegetables and smoked pork. We children also enjoyed foraging for wild blueberries, huckleberries, blackberries, hickory nuts, crab apples, wild plums, grapes, chinquapins and bittersweet oranges. All that, along with Mama's wonderful smell of fresh baking bread in her big black woodstove oven was our life style. The best way to get to town back then was by boat and I remember on several occasions Mama brought me to town with her on the boat. One was The Monitor and one named The Three Friends. I can remember the sights along West Bay Street where we would get off the boat. The dime store was like a fairy land to me, but the people and traffic were frightening. I remember one hotel lobby that seemed grand. It opened right on the sidewalk and had palms in pots and black leather chairs in which sat well-dressed men, some having their shoes shined. The hurrying horses, streetcars and carriages made for an exciting day, and I loved the opportunity to come and the long restful boat ride home with Mama. There were lots of trees in our yard on the river with gentle low branches

that we could climb. One limb was my living room, another the kitchen and so on. I built my doll furniture out of match boxes and whatever I could find. We children had a 'store' on the river beach where we dried orange peels, grapes from the trees and so forth to sell to each other. Our house sat on high brick supports, and we girls would crawl beneath the house and paint our cheeks and lips from the red powder of the crumbling bricks. Daddy made us wash it off if he was home. We loved to have friends and family visit our home. Mama and Daddy always made them welcome. Some people lived with us off and on. Then one year the school was closed. Mama and Daddy had to send the school age children to Jacksonville to live with Aunt Clara, Dad's sister, and her husband Addis, and their children in order to attend school. Daddy sold our home there, and we moved back to Jacksonville. Today the Jacksonville City Light Plant is located on the property, but the memories we have of those wonderful times we spent there will never fade. We first moved on Grape Street where we had many wonderful memories of neighbors and friends. We finally settled down in the spring of 1927 on Fitzgerald Street in west Jacksonville where some in the family lived for almost 40 years. I was ten-years old and in the third grade by then. Daddy would take me to school at Riverside #4 on his way to work, but I'd have to walk home...rain or shine...until the end of the school year, and that was at least four miles.

Our lives centered around the Church in Jacksonville. Mama became Relief Society President for the third time. Mama did many things for those in need that no one but Daddy knew about. Once in Relief Society, the sisters were asked who would feed the missionaries every Tuesday. No hands went up but Mama's. At the time, they were having it so hard, Mama was mostly feeding Daddy and Alice's family on their food storage, but she thought if they could eat it, the Elders could too. It was the years of the Depression.

Daddy, Alice, and I were baptized in May 1925. Mama cooked supper, and they invited President Charles A. Callis over and Daddy gave him a tithing check for \$1,000 from the sale of St. Charles.

Daddy was a faithful member of the Church. He was a faithful hometeacher having as many as 20 families on his route. He always tried to visit as many as he could each fast Sunday and finish out during the following week. He was always ready to go to those who needed help, who needed administering to, needed comforting, or just a friend to talk to. One brother in the Church, Ellison Rudd, told our family what a great inspira-

tion Daddy had always been in his life. He told us that after Daddy died, he would go out to Daddy's grave when he needed help and would talk to him and have prayer. He said he always felt better and was comforted after his visits to Daddy's grave.

At the beginning of World War II the new Main Street Bridge (Alsop) was completed and Daddy was the first bridgetender. He was so proud of his uniform and the job. He was a man who loved and sacrificed for his family. I remember one old shiny brown suit he must have worn for 10 years. He died with a worn out heart October 30, 1953.

Mama missed Daddy, and 13 years later she lost her oldest son Lockwood who died from a heart attack while at work. Nothing or anyone could console Mama. Time and prayers helped her to recover, then two years later she lost her beloved sister Florence, and later her sister Adrene. She was the last of her family to go. All of us who remember Mama in our own special way have one way we remember her in common. We remember her ability to love, her interest in people and things, her love for travel, but above all, her devotion to the Lord and the teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Her long happy life with our dad, Robert Lee Brooks, is the foundation of our lives as we grew up in a home where respect, companionship and love were a natural part of family life.

Mama and Daddy have both passed on from this world, but they spent a lifetime helping those in need. Many nieces and nephews, and even those who were not kin, stayed with them until they could get jobs and get on their feet. All who needed aid were generously given to what ever Mama and Daddy could give or do to help them. I remember Daddy saying he liked the poem "Abou-Ben Adhem". In a sentence, "If his name wasn't written as one who loved the Lord, write it as one who loves his fellowman."



*Rosa Lee Terrell and Robert Lee Brooks.*





**Sons of Dianna Greene and George Paul Canova, at their Sanderson, FL home:**  
Left to right: Albert, William, Nolan, Lonnie, George, Joe, Ed, Paul and Tom.



# THE CANOVA FAMILY

*The history of the Canova family goes far beyond the time this chapter will cover. There is no doubt that the Canova name will long be remembered in the laurels of southern LDS history. Before the turn of this century, members of this family had gained unwavering testimonies of the gospel through the travelling missionaries in Baker County, and one had given his life as a martyr for the crusade of truth. In later years, another member of the family would become the South's first stake president, continuing the family's quest to establish the Church locally to become a beacon of light and knowledge for all who will follow.*

The first roots of the Canova family were found on the Isle of Minorca, but it is thought that they really began in Italy since Canova is an Italian name. The first of the Canova family known to arrive in America was Antonio, and he was living in St. Augustine in 1787. The exact place of his birth is not known, but he is listed in the Parish Registers of the Catholic Church of St. Augustine as having come from Layo and Leon, Isle of Minorca, one of the Baleric Islands off the east coast of Spain. Both 1787 and 1793 Spanish Census of St. Augustine list his family as residents at that time. The 1787 census gives the following concerning him: "His occupation: farmer; inhabits a rented house in the street of the hospital. He has a horse, works about 15 acres of land and desires more." It is known that Antonio's parents were Antonio and Juana Ridevets or Redavets Canova.

Whether or not Antonio Canova migrated to Florida with Andrew Turnbull's colony which later settled the colony of New Smyrna or whether he came directly to St. Augustine after the Spanish occupation is not known. Turnbull had recruited some young families and 110 young Italian bachelors and settled them on the Isle of Minorca until he could further ready his plans to come to New Smyrna, there is strong reason to believe that Antonio arrived in Florida in the latter part of 1768 and then came to St. Augustine in 1777 with the remainder. If so, Antonio was only 12 years old in 1768 and either came alone or with his parents.

Antonio was married to Catalina Maestre, a native of Leon, Minorca, and the daughter of Bartoleme Maestre and Antonia Rodger. She was 22 and he was 24 when they married in 1780. From the christening records, the couple had eight children, and one of them, Antonio Joseph Venancio Canova, is from whom the line of Canova's this chapter is about.

Antonio and Catalina's son Antonio was born April 1, 1794. He married Margarita Francisca Juliana Ponz

or Pons, about 1818. Margarita was born to Juan Ponz and Juana Andreu in St. Augustine on January 7, 1794. The couple is listed in the 1850 census of St. Johns County; his estate valued at 800 dollars, farmer, and as being 56 years old. The oldest of their several children was Paul Bartola Canova, born in St. Augustine in 1818. This is where our story begins to unfold of this illustrious American pioneer legacy.

The saga begins in Jacksonville before the turn of the century with Captain Paul B. Canova as told by his grandson-in-law, Judge Warren P. Ward with supplements from other family members who have spent many years in research for facts.

Not long after the children were born, Paul B. moved his family to Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida. He became a very successful businessman. Judge Ward writes about this time.

"Many years before the War between the States, one of the largest and oldest commercial business houses in Jacksonville, Florida, was Busbee and Canova. They were wholesale grocers and liquor dealers. The little brick store was located on the corner of Ocean and Bay Street. They did an extensive business up and down the St. John's River and throughout the small towns of the interior. Many country people with wagons and carts came as far as Live Oak, Lake City, Starke and Gainesville. One habit this firm had was to place a jug of good liquor in every country wagon that came to their place of business. The senior member of this firm was Capt. Paul B. Canova, who was a member of that large and well-known Canova family, reared in St. Augustine, and were leading business men in every section of the State. Capt. Paul B. Canova was Captain on a steam boat which ran between Jacksonville and Palatka on the St. Johns River.

"The old Canova home was situated on the banks on the St. Johns River at the foot of Liberty Street. Grandmother Canova was a Crespo before she married Capt. Canova. They were high-type Spaniards and were all proud of the Crespo name for some member of that family held military offices of distinction. One day she and I walked down to the river and she showed me the home where she had lived for many years and where she reared a large family. Her oldest son, George P. Canova was the only boy. She pointed out to me where the old boat landed and how she watched the river's bend to see her husband as his boat came into sight.

"She told me many exciting experiences that Capt. Canova had had as Captain on the St. Johns River. They had no pirates on the river to deal with, but they had winds and storms, robbers and tough men of every character. She told me about a terrible storm they had on



the river where the water would pile up like ocean waves and often small boats, dredges and other kinds of water craft would be driven out into the street.

"Grandmother Canova knew what time of day or night to expect her husband's boat to appear. She had signal lights in her home to place in position in order that Capt. Canova could see them, as he appeared in sight. He also had signal lights on his boat so his family could see his boat in sight. They were all Catholics and believed in making the 'Sign of The Cross' at every approach of danger so when the storm was raging at its worst, it gave them great satisfaction as each could see the other making the 'Sign of The Cross.'

"Capt. Canova also held the office of sheriff of Duval County for many years. During the time he was sheriff, a horrible crime was committed. At a large saw-mill located in the eastern part of the city, a young lady was assaulted and murdered. Under the fine detective work of Capt. Canova, three of the murderers were captured, tried, and convicted of the crime, and hanged."

Paul Bartola Canova's marriage to Celestina Crespo, daughter of Manuel and Juana (Jane) Marin November 12, 1840, had its advantages. She had been born in St. Augustine on April 6, 1822, and very likely inherited her grace and dignity from her mother who was a Marin. The Marin family were both well-known and wealthy members of the St. Augustine society. The Marin name appears above the old cathedral door. It was said he made a large contribution. Celestina had all the self-possession of a woman of refinement and wealth. She was rather small and probably did not weigh more than 120 pounds. She lived to be 80 years. Paul Bartola, who was a tall powerfully built man was active and fine looking. He was possessed of great physical strength. He was immaculate in his appearance, and wore a clean white starched shirt every day. He was a great outdoorsman, trapping quails for sport, putting one in each hand, stretching his arms far apart, letting them go and then grabbing his gun he had put between his knees, and shooting them both. He died July 28, 1886, in Jacksonville, Fla., when he was age 68 years, 4 months and 26 days. She died April 15, 1902, in Jacksonville and they both are buried in Evergreen Cemetery. The couple had three daughters and one son. Adaline Damiana was born September 17, 1841, and married Lodrick S. Worrock. George Paul Canova, whose life it is we follow with bits of history from one of his grandsons, Alvin Canova Chace, was born April 23, 1844. Leonoria Susana graced the home on August 21, 1846 or 47. She married Tony Hollingsworth. Cornelia Savina was the youngest, being born just before Christmas, Dec. 13, 1848. She married William Baya. All of the children were born in St. Augustine.



**George  
Paul  
Canova**

George Paul Canova is the fourth generation Canova in America. Not long after the children were born, his father, Paul Bartola moved his family to Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida. He expanded his business, and began investing in property in Sanderson. He and his family moved there sometime in the sixties or seventies as he was in business with his son George Paul in 1873. They owned a large mercantile store. (The 1860 and 1870 census shows them living in Duval County. The 1860 reported real estate valued at \$12,000 and property valued \$1,000.) Part of the time they maintained a home in Jacksonville as the grandchildren visited there and heard from their grandmother Celestina stories of her family. Both Paul B. and his son George Paul had large two-story homes, and Paul B. turned his into a hotel.

In 1830 prior to the Canovas' settling in Baker County there were less than two persons per square mile. The reasons for the slow growth were: no rivers large enough for commercial travel, the area was swampy, there was only one road in the county in 1834, there were boundary disputes, and there was the continuation of the Indian problem. The 'bloody' Seminole War didn't end until 1842 and there was fighting and small raids following that date. On the plus side, was the completion of the Florida, Atlantic and Gulf Central Railroad which affected more individuals and their way of living than any other one thing. It was incorporated Jan. 24, 1851, but construction didn't begin until 1857. It is likely the tracks reached Macclenny sometime in August 1858 a few years before George Paul Canova and Dianna Greene were married. Macclenny was just a few miles from Sanderson, the county seat. Macclenny became the county seat in 1886.

Sanderson had a population of 500 with land selling from \$5 to \$40 an acre. The railroad tracks, running east to west, divided the town. Frame houses stretched on either side shaded by huge oaks and sycamore trees. Sanderson was referred to as a 'watering stop.' In the center of town was a large water tank which stood next to the depot. Will Canova, son of George Paul, began



**Dianna Greene Canova**

*Dianna Greene, daughter of Elisha Greene and Betsy Ann Driggers, married George Paul Canova. Her sister Margaret married Thaddeus Hill. Her sister Emily married Enoch Nathaniel Roberts, whose daughter, Rosanna Lenora, was grandmother to LaViece Smallwood.*

by Tom. J.F. Pons, father-in-law of George Paul's son, George Walter, operated a general store. On a corner dirt road on the south of the tracks, was the Canova store. On the other side of the street was the Old Paul Bertolo home, where George Paul's family lived. Around the turn of the century, Ed Canova owned a boarding house for travelers.

On July 5, 1865, George Paul Canova married Dianna Greene of Sanderson, who was the daughter of Elisha and Elizabeth Ann 'Betsy' Driggers Greene, the progeny of early American pioneer settlers. The couple had 14 children.

Betsy Ann Driggers, Dianna's mother, was born June 30, 1825, in Appling County, Georgia. At an early age she moved with her family to Florida. When she married Elisha they settled three miles out of Sanderson on the South Prong of the St. Mary's River. Betsy was a feisty brown haired young lady. She had been reared in the pioneering era in the uninhabited 'woods'. Their neighbors were savage Indians who raided, stole and murdered. Elisha was courageous, but there was a time that he had to send his family away from the farm. They very likely went to the Fort Alligator, later named Lake City. Their farm buildings were burned, their animals scattered.

As she told her story to her Canova grandchildren they remembered to write it down. She told them her family was still young and growing when their slaves were set free. The family had to do the field work

his long and successful career with the railroad in the small frame building. He taught Tom and several of his cousins the 'dot-dash' system.

Across the tracks to the south of the station, was a blacksmith shop. Farther east, was the 'Old Lodge,' the Masonic Hall where George Paul discussed with other Masons the events of the day. The lodge became the center for the community activities. Many a party was remembered

although some of the slaves stayed close and were helpful. Grandma Betsy taught her grandchildren to scrub wooden floors and keep the yard swept clean, to make soap from crackling grease and potash, to make clothes after weaving the cloth and dyeing it with indigo weed and red oak bark. They helped her boil her clothes in a big iron pot and carry the water from a nearby well. Betsy was a midwife and oftentimes would hop on her horse instead of hitching up the buggy. For pay, most often she would take a sack of potatoes. Before her death she had over 500 notches in her cane, one for each baby she delivered. Her obituary stated, 'she was sent for by people far and near to attend and wait upon their sick. Like a ministering angel of love and mercy she went from place to place through hot and cold weather, in sunshine and rain to lend the distressed and suffering a helping hand. She and her husband Elisha Greene are buried in the South Prong cemetery on Greene's Creek, near their home of 50 years. Her advice shared with her grandchildren still lives on as passed through the Canova family today such as: 'Spend idle moments in usefulness.'

George Paul was 17 when the War between the States occurred. He had learned telegraphy and was sent by the Confederate Army to Olustee and then to Virginia. It was he who sent the message to Jacksonville that the Yanks were coming.

About a month prior to the forming of Baker County, the Florida State Convention met in Tallahassee, January 3, 1861, to consider secession from the Union. There was no question about the necessity of it in the minds of the representatives though some wished to delay until other Southern states acted. Others felt an ordinance of secession should be submitted to the voters for popular approval. But on January 10 the convention adopted the ordinance of secession by a vote of 62 to 7. This, of course, brought many changes to the people of Baker County. As the War got underway Florida was something of a question mark. It was never a solid unit of the Confederacy, but a thorn in the side of the Federal forces for Florida produced supplies for the Southern armies and provided dozens of ports for blockade runners. A steady stream of men left the small towns and farms to join with those of sister states in the cause of states rights... Judge Ward wrote:

"On February 20, 1864, one of the major engagements of the Civil War in Florida was fought at Olustee. The campaign that terminated in the battle began when General Q.A. Gillmore sent a Federal expedition from Hilton Head, South Carolina, to occupy Jacksonville for a third time. The objectives were to break up communications between East and West Florida, in order to deprive the Confederacy of large quantities of food sup-



plies which came from East and South Florida; to procure for Northern use Florida cotton, turpentine and timber; to obtain recruits for Negro regiments; and to persuade Unionists in Florida to organize a loyal state government.

The troops landed under the command of General Truman A. Seymour on February 7th. The next day the Federal troops fanned out from Jacksonville, meeting little or no opposition. In a few days Baldwin was taken, the junction of the railroads from Fernandina to Cedar Keys from Jacksonville to Tallahassee. By February 11th their cavalry had penetrated within a short distance of Lake City, however, after a short skirmish with Confederates, withdrew to Sanderson.

Paul Bartola Canova was too old to take part as a soldier in any of the skirmishes and battles that occurred in this vicinity, but he acted as a spy. At the time this event occurred he had a grocery store on the south side of the Railroad in the middle of Sanderson. He also had built a large two-story house which was known as a hotel, and in this building stored provisions for the Confederate forces. Whether any of the provisions were taken by the Federals or whether the provisions were hidden or taken out in advance of the Union forces is not known, according to one of his sons, Thomas C. Canova.

Dianna Green Canova, wife of Paul Bartola's son, George Paul, related to her children that her parents, Elisha and Elizabeth Ann Greene, lived about three miles south of Sanderson when this battle took place, and that the soldiers astride their horses cut off the heads of the geese with their swords, wrapped the links of sausages around their necks from the smokehouse, killed the pigs, drove the cattle from the place, and freed the slaves. Of

course, this left the family almost in destitute circumstances, and all of the family had to go to work in the fields. When the troops left the place, Elisha Green was made to walk into Sanderson in front of the horses for some reason that was never known.

At the time of the above events, George Paul Canova was about 20 years old, and had been called by the Confederates to send messages as a telegraph operator at Olustee. He was later sent to Virginia as an operator in that section according to his daughter, Adaline Canova Chace.

The older folks in the family related to their children that as the battle increased in fury, the crack of rifles and the roar of the cannons could be heard throughout the vicinity of Sanderson. All of the younger men of the community were called into the battle and after the battle had ceased, wives, children and relatives searched the field of battle for some of their loved ones who might have fallen, reported Katherine (Kitty) Canova Mann, daughter to George Paul Canova.

When George Paul Canova returned home from the war, the freeing of the slaves meant a lot of adjusting and physical hardship and for many a great financial loss. But for young George hopes and dreams were ahead as he contemplated marriage to the lovely Dianna Greene whose wedding was July 5, 1865. He had first met her when she was ploughing barefoot in her father's field as the family's slaves had been run off by the Yankees during the war. Dianna, the oldest of Elisha and Elizabeth Ann (Betsy) Driggers had grown up in a respectable home and her father had been a successful farmer and slave owner before the war. His aristocratic, well-to-do family were staunch Catholics and were not too pleased

with his choice of a country girl who was a Baptist. It didn't take them long however to accept her and love this quiet-spoken, lovely



**George Paul Canova's Home in Sanderson, Florida. (Side view above)**



girl. She may not have had an opportunity for 'book learning,' but her parents were industrious, hard working, religious people who taught their children the love of God, to be respectful and kind. She was the first born of twelve children of Elisha and Betsy Ann Greene.

After their marriage, the couple settled in Sanderson near her parents. Dianna was of a larger build than her husband, tall and stately and lovely to look upon though weighing nearly 200 pounds. George was five feet six inches tall, slight build, weighing only 115 pounds, but he was strong and industrious. When they married he had only \$10. He went to work as a clerk in his father's store for \$30 a month. For a short time they lived in a little log cabin three miles out of Sanderson and he walked to and from his job. He began making money by hauling logs, arising by three o'clock in the morning before the farmers were in the fields. With a team of six mules he drove out into the timber country. His crew of Negroes would drag logs 40 to 50 feet in length to the woodyard. They could drag three to eight logs per day, depending on how large they were and how far he had to drag them to the railroad.

George made it a point to get acquainted and make friends with the man in charge and the men who loaded the logs onto the flatbed railroad cars. He often received preferential treatment in getting the cars closest and most convenient for loading. He rewarded them with treats from the store and an occasional bottle of whiskey.

Being anxious at the outset to be a successful business man, George borrowed from Bryant Roberts \$1,000.00 for operating expenses, and it wasn't long before he began expanding and investing. At one time when purchasing a little ranch, the owner insisted on being paid in gold. George had a little bird shot pouch with \$8,000.00 in gold with which he paid for the property. He and Dianna became the parents of 14 children, 10 boys and four girls: Rose

Lee, Annie, Paul Elisha, Edward Emanuel, Joseph Frances, George Walter, William Robert, Thomas Ramon, Adaline, Katherine (Kitty) Albert Crespo, a still born child, Alonza Bartola and Oscar Nolan. Joe, Paul, and Ed later settled in Starke, where they raised large families and have many descendants still in the community. Joe, the father of movie starlets, Judy and her daughter Dianna Canova, eventually moved to Jacksonville, then Hollywood, where his daughter's career was launched with a popular hillbilly show on Jacksonville's city-owned radio station, WJAX. Thomas Ramon moved to California and the others remained in the area.

In 1888, the year Lonnie was born, disease ended the boom in Baker County as Yellow Fever spread from Jacksonville westward. There were now 10 children at home (Annie married and Nolan not yet born). Fear struck the heart of every family. It was thought that Dr. Horace Berry, a pharmacist living in Glen St. Mary brought the disease from Jacksonville. Trains running from Tallahassee to Jacksonville were not allowed to stop in the county during the fever

epidemic. Food supplies were thrown from the train as it traveled through. At the end of the epidemic, the county boom period had ended. Woodlawn and Manntown cemeteries

were full and Darbyville (Macclenny) became a ghost town not be reestablished as a growing community for many years. Ninety percent of the population was dead, forcing many to close their businesses.

George Paul had a flourishing orange grove about this time. On December 29, 1894, a northwest wind brought freezing temperatures into the state causing wide-spread damage. The plants' cambium layer of bark filled with sap and new growth developed and the future looked bright for him. But a second devastating freeze followed on February 7,



**Sons of Dianna Greene and George Paul Canova, at their Sanderson, FL home:**

*Left to right: Albert, William, Nolan, Lonnie, George, Joe, Ed, Paul and Tom.*



**Daughters of Dianna Greene and George Paul Canova, with their mother:**

*Left to right: Katherine, Mother Dianna, Adaline and Annie.*



1895, with temperatures reaching 18 degrees. All citrus was lost as the sap of the trees turned to ice, bark ruptured and trees were girdled. The impact was felt for many years.

George was undaunted and not given to discouragement. In these early days of Baker County, there was much disrespect for the law. Men carried guns, there were Negro uprisings, shootings, and stabbings on the least provocation. Ruthless men tried to take advantage of each other. Many were dishonest and failed to pay their bills.

George and Dianna wanted to see that their large family had good experiences and the right teachings. The fact that George was a Catholic and Dianna a Baptist gave them some concern and there was some 'opposition' in the religious teachings in the family. The younger girls were sent to a Catholic school, and as they were growing up they trained in business while working in their father's store. Most of the boys were sent away to school in their teens and given special training in various fields. Most were given music lessons, which were used professionally in later years. Although they were both good disciplinarians, George and Dianna indulged their daughters with shopping excursions to Jacksonville, and they were generous with their talented sons. Tom played by ear for enjoyment, while Nolan and Oscar played in bands and orchestras. George indulged them with gifts he brought back from business trips as well as his nieces and nephews who remember his generosity.

Though they were generous they tried never to 'spoil' the children or have them be disrespectful. They were rather strict in this. If the boys got out of line when they were young, George, who had a little switch handy, would just shake it at them and say, 'Come, come boys.' There was the time when Dianna had told one of the boys he could not go away to play, but he went anyway. Thinking he could soften his mother, he picked some blackberries to give her on his return. She met him at the door, tossed the blackberries out the back door and then 'took care' of him. As a result of this kind of discipline, the children were taught to be self-reliant and obedient. They were taught to lead a good moral life and to be honest in all their dealings.

When Adaline was about 12 years old, she and her sister Kitty were boarded at St. Joseph's Academy, a Catholic convent in Fernandina, where SR Antonio taught them music. They were the only ones in school not Catholic. In the summertime they spent their days with the family in Sanderson. One Christmas vacation when Adaline was 13 years old she remembers seeing the train pass through with her brother Joe and his new bride, Rita Perry. They had just married in Lake City. The couple waved to the family as they passed through

Sanderson on their way to Savannah for a honeymoon. Another remembrance of Adaline Canova was the big freeze when she was 14 years old. She remembers coming home from school on vacation and discovering that all the orange trees had frozen and the trees had to be cut down.

After two years of the children being away at school in Fernandina and Jacksonville George and Dianna hired Miss Eva Story to teach all the remaining children at their home in Sanderson.

George was known as an honest man and set the example for his family. He paid his debts on time and liked the two percent discount received if he paid by the tenth of the month. He worked hard. He had half a dozen sharecroppers. He would get up at four o'clock in the morning to make the rounds of the sharecroppers and often said, "the eye of the master fattens the calf." In the winter months, when the cotton was ripe, they would bring it in to his store and weigh it. He would give them the market price. They would then pay their grocery and mercantile account. He would extend credit to most all in the county who needed it. The sharecroppers could have all the pigs and chickens and feed and all the milk they wanted. He forgave the widow her debts, was kind and understanding, but with the lazy and slothful, he was rigid in his demands for payments. There were times when he had to foreclose on their property. This sometimes caused enmity. Some resented him because they felt his wealth had given him power.

His father had died in 1886 while George was making his own way and becoming financially successful. Almost a decade later religion would become an important factor in his life and alter his quests in life considerably. It was in the summer of 1897 when Dianna became interested in the Mormon doctrine that she was hearing from her sister Margaret and brother-in-law Thaddeus Hill.

The Florida Conference of the Church was organized November 1, 1895, but it was not until late in 1896 that the travelling Mormon missionaries, dressed in their swallow-tail coats and derby hats, carrying their ever-present umbrellas, were sent from the Church headquarters in Salt Lake City to bring the gospel to Sanderson. They had particularly captured the attention of Thad Hill who had been waiting for a church that had apostles and prophets. He was converted almost instantly, though Margaret, a hardshell Baptist, was a little slower in accepting it. On July 25, 1897, the couple and their three oldest children were baptized and a Sunday School was organized the next day.

Up until this time George and Dianna had turned a deaf ear. In fact, George had told his family and some of his share croppers not to associate with the missionaries

because they had a bad reputation. He warned they would be taking a chance if they 'entertained' them. There was much resistance in the town, and some commotion concerning the missionaries, but when they came again after the baptisms of the Hills they contacted Dianna and George's fourth son, George Walter. They asked him where they could hold a meeting and he arranged for them to use a little tenant house belonging to George's father which was vacant at the time. George went to the meeting and he was so impressed that he told his mother about it and invited her to attend the next one held. Dianna was impressed, and when her husband arrived home from his business trip to Jacksonville she related her experience. Though he was shocked, he asked his son George the next day to arrange another meeting.

George listened attentively and after the meeting invited the missionaries to visit his home. From that day forward, their home was always open to the missionaries. Conferences were held periodically at which time the Canovas' spread their table abundantly for the 25-40 missionaries in attendance. At one time George asked Dianna what it was costing. When she told him, he said, "Don't bother to keep track any more!"

Two months following the Hill's baptism, George and Dianna, along with their daughters, Kitty and Adaline, were baptized in the South Prong of the Little St. Mary's River on September 8th. Also baptized that day were Dan Mann, Annie and Liza Wilson, Effie and Amy Wester. Many watched the baptism out of curiosity. Later they all went up to Margaret and Thad Hill's home, about 600 feet away, where the Elders preached to the crowd that was present. In the afternoon, all members returned to Sanderson where they were confirmed in the Masonic Lodge Hall. They and the other families became totally involved in the movement. George donated an organ, and Kitty and Adaline, both accomplished musicians, played the hymns with feeling and enthusiasm. They scrubbed and cleaned the little house until it shined, brought in oil lamps and made curtains for the windows.

Lester A. Stevenson, Conference Sunday School Superintendent sent an article in to the Deseret Evening News in Salt Lake dated September 10, 1897, which he gave the following description of Florida and report on activities.

"Florida named land of Flowers for her forests, hills, highways and hedges, are decked and adorned with their beauties.....their fragrance wafted on the gentle sea breezes." He further reported, "The forepart of May 1898 the Elders, Saints and friends spent a few days mingling with each other, enjoying temporal and spiritual feasts." In reporting his journey to Sanderson,

he said he had 'met the school and our hearts were filled with joy and swelled with emotion as the little ones sang the songs of Zion accompanied with an organ which was given by George Paul Canova, a kind friend and well-wisher of the cause.'

At this time there were 11 Sunday Schools in the state. On December 31, 1897, a statistical report was given by President Elias S. Kimball, President of the Southern States Mission, which read: "Since the beginning of the present year, the work in some directions has developed splendidly, particularly in this the case of baptisms, organizing branches and Sunday schools, and in building church houses. The growing activity of the Elders stirs up some bitterness which crops out occasionally in the shape of mobbings and severe attacks from the press and pulpit. In the main, however, the people are coming to understand the Elders and the work better each day and the enemies to the truth are gradually losing their influence"...

Ordained and set apart to do missionary work were Uriah Hassell, Mac Redding, Joseph E. Peddie, James B. Wright, Albert Humphries, Henry L. Wester and George P. Canova. George Paul Canova appointed president of Sanderson Branch and Henry L. Wester, Sunday School Superintendent."

In six months Dianna would be a widow, and her 54-year-old husband's name would go down in the annals of southern LDS history as Florida's only martyr for his beloved Church and its Gospel.

At the time of his death he was considered the wealthiest man in Baker County. He owned about ten thousand acres of grazing land, and one thousand head of cattle, turpentine trees, timber land, a large mercantile store, a hotel, a large cotton gin and orange groves according to the Canova family history. He was a conscientious Democrat, an extreme Partisan, and one of the most active workers in his Party. He was elected to the Legislature in 1879, the year his son Thomas R. was born. In his first term he served on the Committee for Finance and Taxation, and he was chairman for the Committee Claims. He was elected to a second term and was Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners in 1898.

All 13 of Dianna and George's children were born in Sanderson. A daughter, Rosa Lee, died in infancy.

The family remaining at his death were: Dianna, his wife and twelve children, eleven grandchildren, his mother, his mother-in-law, eight brothers and sisters-in-law. Of his children six were married, Annie, Paul Elisha, Edward Emanuel, Joseph Francis, George Walter and William Robert. Thomas Ramon was age 19, Adaline 17, Catherine (Kitty) 15, Albert Crespo 13, Alonzo Bartola (Lonnie) would be 10 in just four days,



and Oscar Nolan was only eight years old when this tragedy occurred.

After the death of Dianna, November 29, 1906, Ed was appointed guardian of 16-year-old Nolan. Albert and Lonnie lived with older

members of the family. By 1915, most of the Sanderson property had been sold and the children, except Kitty, had scattered to northern and central Florida. Thomas R was the only member to move West.

The following story is a rare eye-witness glimpse into the life of the George Paul Canova family while they lived in Sanderson and his martyrdom. It was recorded by Thomas Ramond, the couple's eighth child, before his death. In the narrative, he details the most dramatic event the family would ever experience, the martyr of their patriarch. He was the first to reach the scene of the murder and the following is transcribed from his own words concerning this historic and memorable event.

## THOMAS RAYMOND CANOVA

Sanderson, Baker County

*Thomas Raymond Canova, in a 1963 taped interview with his daughter, Viola Canova Clark of St. George, Utah, discussed the details of his father's untimely death as Florida's only known martyr for the LDS Church. In addition, he discusses portions of his life and that of his Baker County ancestry such as his maternal grandparents, Elisha Greene and Elizabeth Driggers Greene. It is printed here for future reference as he, and some of his brothers, were the first to reach the murder scene of their slain father, George Paul Canova. Therefore his eye-witness account takes historical precedent over other accounts by individuals who were not there and news accounts that has accompanied the tragedy since that time. The tape has been made available to me for transcribing by his daughter, Viola Clark, of St. George, Utah. LMS*

"Before 1900 Florida had very poor schools. Students attended about three to four months out of the



## \$2,500 REWARD

Will be paid for the apprehension and conviction of the person or persons who assassinated

GEORGE P. CANOVA,  
near Sanderson, Fla., June 5, 1898.

For particulars, address

MRS. GEO. P. CANOVA,  
Sanderson, Fla.  
or W. P. WARD,  
Jacksonville, Fla.

year, and it was hard to follow the course through and get a good solid education. My father decided to hire another teacher to teach his children another four months so we got to attend school eight months a year. That brought me up to about the 6th grade, or what would be about sixth grade this day and time, when I was about 16 years old. I didn't know what I wanted to be, but shortly after I was 16, the Mormon missionaries came and there was quite a little commotion around the community as to their reputation. My father, who owned several farms, advised some of his close associates, who were working people, some of them share croppers, that they were taking a big chance to entertain those fellows because their reputation was awful bad. And I thought it was true. So one of my brothers and some of the boys in the town were talking to these men and they wanted to know where they could hold a meeting, and it was arranged for them to use a little cottage, a little tenant house my father had that was vacant. So three or four went, about all the congregation they had. Now these two missionaries were highly educated men and they held a meeting and these boys were deeply impressed. My brother George, who was just a young fellow about 17 years old, told my mother and insisted that mother go hear them when they preached again the next time. So she went and was very much impressed with the sermon. When my father returned from the city in Jacksonville, Florida, for we lived about 40 miles out to the west of the city, Mother said, 'I have some news for you. What do you think? I went to hear the Mormons preach last night'. He said, 'You did? What did you think of them?' 'Well, the only thing I can tell you', she said, 'is for you to listen yourself. You should hear them in one of those little meetings'. So he began to inquire about them, and about that time we saw two of them crossing where we had a place of business across the railroad to the other side of the town where there was another big store and a Post Office. So he told this

brother that had listened to them preach to go ask them if they would hold another meeting. So they went over to the Post Office and contacted the missionaries, and they said they'd be glad to hold a meeting. So it was arranged for that night, and Father went to the meeting and listened very attentively and invited them to his home, although he had advised his neighbors not to entertain them because of their reputation. So from that time on, our home was opened up to the missionaries, up to 20-35 at the time, especially when they'd have gatherings there or conferences. A little while later, possibly a couple months later, the head missionary for Georgia and Florida notified all the people around they were going to have a conference at Sanderson, in Baker County. It was agreed they would all cooperate, so my father, having quite a few animals, pigs, cows, chickens and so forth, butchered these animals and sent them around to the different neighbors. Then from his big mercantile store, a store very similar to the modern markets of today yet built in a very crude manner compared to today, he gathered some food and sent to half a dozen more of the neighbors who would cook this food and entertain these missionaries. But a number of the missionaries, I'd say about 24 would stop at our place the week-end of the conference. One time two of the apostles, Matthias Cowley and Frances M. Lyman and Elias Kimball, the mission president, and his wife came down to the conference and spent about three days with all these missionaries in our home. I remember there would be three sittings at the table every day at every meal before they could feed all the people. Our dining room was full at each setting. So at this little conference, which was about four months from the time they had been baptized, they ordained my father an elder to take charge of the missionary work in the community. And this he did during the holiday of 1897. And in 1898, or about six months later, the fifth of June, he went to a conference in an adjoining county on a week-end with one of my uncles, Thaddeus Hill. He had married my mother's sister, Margaret, and they had joined the Church too. On returning home about dark Sunday night, they came to a cross fence where there is always a gate to be opened on account of there was no law to keep the cattle penned up, so they ran wild. My uncle got out of the buggy to open the gate and someone had placed an extra rail across the gate which made it a little difficult to open. My uncle hollered to my father, 'George, someone has placed a rail against the gate, and it's kind of hard to open'. And my father said, 'Well, Thad, they ought not to do that'. That separated their voices where father was sitting in the buggy getting ready to drive through when my uncle opened the gate. Just at that moment, when their voices were separated, guns

fired from behind some large trees, I guess some 20-25 feet away. It was just after dark, about 7 o'clock, the best we could gather from what my uncle said. And he said he heard my father say, 'Oooee, oooee,' when he was shot. My uncle knew there was trouble up then and the gate being opened, he just ran right out through the timbers and kept running, finally reaching our home which was five or six miles away. He first came to a farm house and recognized the farmer who happened to be one of our old school teachers, and he took my uncle in the buggy and brought him on into Sanderson where the report was given to my mother. She woke up myself and my brothers and we got on our horses and in buggies, we all had quite a lot of conveyances, and started out to where this took place. We found the horse and buggy about a mile nearer to our home from where the shooting was and he was partly unhooked from the buggy, just standing there, perhaps resting, from his long trip. So we put him back to the buggy and harnessed him up good and went on about a mile to where the shooting occurred. We saw an object then because the moon had come up, and it was a little brighter on the side where the horse and buggy was standing when he was shot. He had gotten through the gate. It seemed he had jumped out of the buggy, or he was dragged out, we couldn't tell. But when he was on the ground we knew he was still alive because he had grass and pine straw in both hands. His hat was a couple or three feet away from his head, he wore a derby hat. There was a hole right through the derby showing they ran right around where he was and put the gun close to his head and just blew his head, split his head open, and knocked the derby to one side. I saw something white on the derby and knew it was his brains. We took some clothes and wrapped his head up, pushing his head together and wrapped him up, and put him in the buggy and took him home. It was then between 11 or 12 o'clock at night, about four or five hours after he was shot. Mother was still up and waiting for us, and we could see that the shock was terrible on her part. But she took it very quietly, and we laid him in the parlor and notified the family that was away. The following day, Monday, we had an undertaker prepare the body at Sanderson and then it was taken to Jacksonville by train and buried in Evergreen Cemetery.

"We had some evidence that connected a man that had been drinking a little heavy on Saturday. He had been talking to my brother Joe saying he liked the Mormon Church and said he thought he'd join it himself. He asked Joe when our father would be coming back and I suppose my brother told him he'd be back Sunday night. So we think to this day that he knows something about it. He was a free Mason and so was my father, but the thought in the community was that no



Mason would kill another Mason. However, this particular man had a brother he had not spoken to for a year or two. They were living as enemies. But that Saturday night he went to this brother and visited him, and we think he killed him. We never had either brother to make any confession whatsoever. The circumstantial evidence was so strong that we were justified in arresting the father and his two sons. One was about grown and the other in his teens. They were kept in jail without bond for 6 months, and we had trials but we could not get enough evidence to connect them with the murder. It was reported that this was the most mysterious murder that had occurred in Florida at that time except for a family that had been murdered in south Florida. As was a custom among the people in Florida at that time, most everybody had a pistol or a weapon. My father had a .32 caliber Smith and Wesson pistol that he usually carried along with him. He had been complaining about a pain in his right arm and that he felt he had a touch of neuritis making it hard to raise his right arm up. However that pistol was missing. Evidently they searched him and took his pistol. We have never heard of the pistol since. My father couldn't have defended himself anyway because he was shot in the head. We think he was conscious enough to jump out of the buggy. The horse would not have moved with those unexpected shots. He was a very fine trotting horse, very fast, that cost several hundred dollars and weighed about 1200 pounds. He was pulling a surrey, it was a little heavier than an ordinary buggy and had two seats in it. We think my father jumped out and fell to the ground and they ran around there and shot him. He had one bullet, or buckshot in the center of his nose, he had one right in the knuckle of his hand, one bullet went through the bridle, and I have that piece of leather to this day showing how the buckshot went through cutting it almost half into.

Thus ended the life of George Paul Canova on June 5, 1898, at a place called Juncture after a conference of the Church at New Zion in Bradford County. Some of the early missionaries to the area included Elders G.A. Stevenson of Salt Lake City and Matthias Cowley. George P. Canova was ordained an elder on January 3, 1898, by Elder Francis M. Lyman who later became the senior apostle of the Church. He was appointed to be branch president of the Sanderson Branch of the Church. At the time he was one of the most well-to-do men in Baker County and served as chairman of the Baker County Commissioner. He had been a Representative from the county in the State Legislature, and at the time of his death was a member of the county Democratic executive committee. He owned several farms, large herds of cattle, hogs and sheep. He owned the only cotton gin in the area. In

addition to all of these properties he had extensive real estate holdings in Jacksonville. Prior to his murder, Elder John Z. Brown, the Conference President of Florida, and several other Elders were staying at the home of the Canova family. In March of 1898 he received the following letter, addressed Mormon Elders, Sanderson, Florida. It read, "We have notified you damn rascals once to vacate this county and you haven't done so. Now you infernal dead beats let this be the last notice. We will give you all until Monday, March 28th, and if you polygamous villains are not gone by that night, we, committee of 8, will go up to Sanderson (same time) and cow hide every one of you especially a certain man that is encouragin and feeding you dogs. Now remember this will be your last notice." Signed by Committee.

Reward posters that bore George P. Canova's picture, were distributed throughout the area. The headline read : THE BLOOD OF GEORGE P. CANOVA CRIES FOR JUSTICE! The State of Florida offered a \$1,000 reward for the apprehension and conviction of the persons who committed the crime. In addition, a reward of \$500 was offered by the Board of Baker County Commissioners. Mrs. George P. Canova offered another \$1,000 making a total of \$2,500 for any information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person/persons who committed the crime.

A letter from Mission President, Frank H. Cutler was sent to *The Deseret Evening News*: Saturday, June 18, 1898. Assassination of a Mormon: Was murdered while returning home from Church. Elder G.P. Canova, entering the gate at his residence, was shot down, a companion escapes. Sanderson, Florida, June 9th, 1898.

To the Editor. "We regret deeply that at times fate compels us to report anything but pleasant news. But a gloom has been cast over us that will sadden the heart of every Elder of our conference and a grief brought upon our friends that tears can scarcely wash away. Our noble and staunch friend, Elder Geo. P. Canova, was foully assassinated a little while after dark last Sunday night, June 5th, taking from our midst one whose generosity had reached the heart of every Elder or Saint who knew him.

Brother Canova was a local Elder and presided over a branch of the Church at Sanderson.

We were holding a branch conference at New Zion on the 4th and 5th instant and he was in attendance. He enjoyed the services and was in high spirits when he separated from us to return home some twenty-five miles away. The distance compelled them to travel in the night and at Juncture, when Bro. Thad. Hill, his only companion, was opening a gate, Bro. Canova was fired

STATE OF FLORIDA, }  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE }

Tallahassee, Fla., July 1, 1898.

WHEREAS it is officially reported to me that on or about the night of June 5th, A. D. 1898, Hon. George P. Canova, of Baker County, Florida, was assassinated in said County of Baker, by some persons to the authorities of said County unknown.

THEREFORE, acting under and by the authority vested in the Governor of the State of Florida by the laws of said State I, W. D. BLOXHAM, Governor of the said State of Florida, do hereby offer and proclaim a reward of

**\$1,000**

for the apprehension and conviction of the persons who committed said crime.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed at Tallahassee, the Capital, this first day of July, A. D. 1898, and of the Independence of the United States the One Hundred and Twenty-Second.

W. D. BLOXHAM,

Governor of Florida.

By the Governor attest:

JOHN L. CRAFTFORD,

Secretary of State.

# THE BLOOD

—OF—

## George P. Canova

CRIES FOR

## JUSTICE!



In addition to the reward of One Thousand Dollars offered by the Governor of the State of Florida, and the reward of Five Hundred Dollars offered by the County Commissioners of Baker County, I hereby offer the further sum of

### One Thousand Dollars

for the apprehension and conviction of the parties, or either of them, who murdered my husband, George P. Canova, making in all the sum of Twenty-Five Hundred Dollars.

### \$500 Additional Reward.

Since the death of my husband, George P. Canova, information has reached me to the effect that the public has been led to believe that Mr. Canova had something to do with the murder of Mr. Henry Congleton or Col. Cobb. I now offer a reward of Five Hundred Dollars for proof to show that Mr. Canova had anything whatever to do with the murder of either Mr. Congleton or Mr. Cobb.

MRS. GEORGE P. CANOVA.

Sanderson, Florida, November 10th, 1898.

## Proceedings

### County Commissioners

Office of the Board of County Commissioners of Baker County.

Maccleddy, Fla., July 18, 1898

—Board met as per adjournment and a quorum being present, to-wit: F. J. Pons, chairman; Messrs. Combs, Phillips and Williams, the following business was transacted:

On motion of Mr. Combs the following reward was offered:

Ordered that the sum of

**\$500**

in addition to the \$1000 offered by the Governor, will be paid by the County Commissioners of Baker County for the apprehension and conviction of the murderer or murderers of Hon. George P. Canova, who was foully assassinated on the night of the 5th of June, 1898.

F. J. PONS,

Chairman.

Attest:

JAS. D. CHALKER,

Clerk.



upon. Bro. Hill made good his escape. The perpetrator finished the horrid deed and then fled.

The mangled body was brought home to the grief-stricken family and after fitting services the remains were interred in the Evergreen Cemetery at Jacksonville.

Brother Canova, since his acceptance of the gospel, has been a sincere member, striving to live up to all of its requirements, happy and contented in the hope of eternal life.

No cause existed for the committee of such a crime, not the slightest provocation was given.

This is not the first of like happenings in this country and the fact that murder after murder is being perpetrated and the guilt that evades punishment forces our minds to recall the state of affairs that existed among the Nephite nation previous and instrumental to their downfall and destruction; also the predictions concerning the things that should exist in this our day previous to Christ's second coming." Respectfully Frank H. Cutler

#### REPORT TO FIRST PRESIDENCY

*A report sent by Pres. Frank H. Cutler to the Presidency of the Church at Church headquarters in Salt Lake,*

"Brother Canova....ordained an Elder Jan 3, 1898, by Apostles Francis M. Lyman and M.F. Cowley and set apart as President of the Sanderson Branch of the Church, which position he filled with honor, being conscientious and sincere in his religious convictions, setting an example before his family in all the principles he had embraced. While at a Branch Conference which was being held in Bradford County (New Zion), Brother Canova enjoyed the good spirit that prevailed and at four p.m. Sunday evening Jan 5, he took his departure to his home some 25 miles distant. It had been my intention to accompany Brother Canova to his home, but circumstances prevented me from going. Bro. Canova, being chairman of the Board of Commissioners, had to go that night.

A little after dark, some eight miles from Sanderson, he was fired upon by two parties in ambush while his companion, Bro. Thaddeus Hill was in the act of opening the gate. (He gave other details already given in this narrative). Some threats had been made against him at one time for his connection with the Church and his entertaining the Elders, but his financial success probably caused the envy and enmity of some of his less fortunate neighbors.

However, the testimony of those who knew him was that he was a man of honor and integrity, having won the confidence of his fellow citizens and having held positions of honor in the State. The funeral took place at Sanderson on Tuesday, June 7, the remains were taken to Jacksonville Evergreen Cemetery. Brother Canova was

56 years of age and left a wife, 12 sons and daughters.

*Dated June 16th, 1898, from Salt Lake City, Utah, came this letter from Francis M. Lyman, senior apostle of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was printed on stationery from the office of The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and was addressed to Mrs. Anna Canova, Sanderson, Baker Co., Florida.* "My dear Sister and Family:—"By letter, from Pres. Frank H. Cutler of the 8th inst. I have just learned of the sad, and inhuman butchery of my dear friend, your husband and father, Geo. P. Canova. I can't remember, when I was so shocked, as when I read of that awful tragedy. How well I remember every movement, of that good friend of mine, in making every thing pleasant as possible, at our open air conference, in Sanderson, about the first day of this year. Also how he anticipated our every want making our little room as comfortable as possible. He waited upon us hand and foot. In fact, I, more than once, felt embarrassed that he did not let us wait upon ourselves more. This was not only true of him but of every one of the family. In all the South we were generously cared for, but in no place were we better taken care of than in Sanderson by my Brother Canova who has been consigned to a martyr's grave by the hands of cruel assassins. Now my Dear Sister and family, I condole with you. You have my heart's sympathy, and my prayers shall ascend to our Heavenly Father, that the murderer may be revealed and punished. You may bear in mind that the slayers of the Prophet Joseph, and the guilty ones who crucified our Blessed Lord, went unwhipped of justice, so far as receiving the just deserts under the laws of the land, was concerned. Let me in all love for you and your beautiful family admonish you, never for one moment think of seeking revenge by your own hands. Let the law take its course that your hands may be clean from blood. Vengeance belongs to the Lord, and none can escape it. There is nothing plainer in Holy writ, than the vengeance belongeth to the Lord. Read Romans 12th chapter and 19th verse. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Also read Deut. 32:35, Isaiah 61:1, Jeremiah 51:6, Jude 7, Micah 5:15, Nahum 1:2. From these scriptures, and all others bearing on this subject, modern as well as ancient, this true principle is laid down unmistakable, that man should not take revenge by his own hand. When the Lord meets our vengeance it will never miss the mark. The right one shall receive the blow. If by the law justice can be meted out, it is well. You shall always be remembered in my prayers. You have my blessing, upon the crown of your heads, and the blessings of God upon you also, if you will listen

to the advice of His Servant. Please remember me to every one of the boys and girls, they are fresh in my memory. I would be kindly remembered also to all the Saints who remember me. I am quite sure that Elder Cowley would endorse every word I have written, for he was just as deeply interested in my brother Canova as I was. How well do I remember when I laid my hands on your husband and blessed him to preside over the Sanderson Branch. It seems but yesterday and O! what terrible thigs can happen in so brief a space. Please let Pres. Cutler consider this letter as answering his very feeling and beautiful letter.

May our Heavenly Father bless you all abundantly with the consoling influence of His Holy Spirit, that your hearts may be healed and that He may make up to you this apparently irreparable affliction.

I am your sincere friend, and affectionate brother in the Gospel of life and salvation. Be comforted, be of good cheer, and our Heavenly Father will never desert you. Be good Saints, and do the Lord's will for thus alone can come true consolation. Once more, God bless you forever. Francis M. Lyman

*News clipping from Jacksonville Florida, dated June 6, 1898, in the Times-Union and Citizen. Page 6.*

#### KILLED BY ASSASSIN:

George P. Canova murdered at Sanderson Sunday Night: Was Fired Upon from Ambush While Driving Along the Road — Investigation Being Held.

"Information was received in the city yesterday of the assassination, near Sanderson, in Baker County, of George P. Canova, a member of the Board of County Commissioners of that county and one of its most highly respected citizens. Mr. Canova died almost instantly from the wounds inflicted.

Information received from the correspondent of the Times-Union and Citizen is to the effect that Mr. Canova was killed about three miles south of Sanderson, while he was driving along the road in company with Thad Hill.

After driving over a bridge, it was found that the road was blocked in some manner and Mr. Hill got out of the buggy to see what the trouble was. Just as he jumped out someone fired from ambush along the roadside, there being three shots. These shots took effect, resulting in the death of Mr. Canova.

There is said to be no clue to the perpetrator of the crime, although a son of Mr. Canova came to Jacksonville yesterday and secured bloodhounds to put upon the track of the assassin. An inquest will be held, to be conducted by E.E. Pons.

Mr. Canova had resided on West Monroe Street, in La Villa, for some time recently, his children going to

school here. The family moved back to Sanderson last week.

Mr. Canova was the father of \*Mrs. W. P. Ward of this city and a brother of Mrs. William Baya and Mrs. L. Warrock. Mr. and Mrs. Ward and family went up to Sanderson on the morning train yesterday. He was one of the wealthiest men in Baker County and had figured prominently in politics there for the past few years. At the time of his death he was chairman of the Board of County Commissioners and a member of the county Democratic executive committee. He had also been a Representative from the county in the State Legislature. \*George Paul Canova was also survived by his mother, Celestina Crespo, who lived to April 15, 1902. He was her only son.

#### MACCLENNY, JUNE 6—

The Baker County Democratic executive committee met today pursuant to the call of the chairman and adjourned until June 18, out of respect for the late George P. Canova, who was a member of the committee.

The County Commissioners met today in regular session, and adjourned to meet June 13, without transacting any business out of respect for George P. Canova chairman of the board.

*THE SOUTHERN STAR carried a report of the assassination and added:*

"Brother Canova, since accepting the Gospel, has been a sincere member of the Church; ever striving to live up to all of its requirements; happy and contented was he in the hope of eternal life. No cause existed for the committal of such a crime, not the slightest provocation was given. The fact that murders are being perpetrated and the guilty evade punishment, forces our minds to recall the state of affairs that existed among the Nephite nation, previous to and instrumental of bringing about their downfall and destruction; also the prediction concerning the things that should exist in our day previous to Christ's second coming."

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#### OH, LORD GRANT PEACE

*Oh, Lord grant peace to those who've died  
Without justice on their side  
Give to them a mansion great  
As they enter at Thy gate  
At Thy table let them sup  
From a sweet and soothing cup  
In Thy bosom, let them rest  
Give to them Thy very best  
Justice reigns on high with Thee  
At last! At last! Their souls are free.*

*La Viece M. Smallwood*

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Wch / 8/98

we have notified you some  
months once to vacate this  
county and you havent done  
so show your infernal  
dead brats let this be the  
last notice we will give  
you all until monday  
march 28th and if you  
proliguous villains are not  
gone by that night we  
committee of 8 will go up  
to Andersons home there and  
can hide any one of you es-  
pecially a certain man that  
is encouragin and feeding your  
dogs. Now remember this will  
be your last notice

Signed by Smith

Wmmy Elders  
Sunderbury  
Florida

"A certain man that is encouragin and feeding you  
dogs" was George Paul Canova. This letter was  
delivered to Elder John Z. Brown, the Conference  
President of Florida. He and several other Elders  
were staying at the home of George Paul Canova.

I certify that the above copy  
is correct I was the man who  
received the above letter.

John Z. Brown  
Sept 28. 1958.

*A following article from the Times-Union Citizen detailed George Canova's death.*

#### KILLING OF G.P. CANOVA:

One Of The Most Fiendish Murders Ever Committed:  
Was Shot Six Times, and Then an Ax Was Used —  
The Body Brought Here for Burial.

Further particulars received concerning the death of George P. Canova last Sunday evening show that it was, without doubt, one of the most deliberately and foully planned and executed murders that have disgraced the history of Florida. In company with his brother-in-law, T.A. Hill, Mr. Canova was returning from church, and when the two arrived at a gate that barred their way, Mr. Hill got out of the buggy to open it and allow the team to pass. No sooner had he dismounted, than assassins, concealed near by, opened fire on Mr. Canova. As he heard the shots fire, Mr. Hill ran and Mr. Canova was pulled from the buggy, having been shot in the head, the ball entering his left eye and coming out at the top of his head. A gash appeared to have been cut in the head that laid it open to the brain. Six shots were fired, each of which took effect. One entered the left eye, as related above, another the nose, one the left leg, another broke all the fingers of the left hand, and several buckshot were found in the left leg. The fiends, after shooting their victim, seemed not to be satisfied with their work and possible fearing that he was not dead, used an ax, inflicting horrible wounds on the head.

Justice of the Peace, E.E. Pons, ex-offici coroner, impaneled a jury, which viewed the body, and adjourned till tomorrow at 11 o'clock in the morning. Every effort is being made to secure evidence. A crowd visited the scene of the murder yesterday, and great indignation was expressed at the cowardly murder. Bloodhounds were placed on the trail of the supposed murderers, and five men were arrested at a house near the place of the killing, to which place the scent of the hounds led them. The prisoners were held for several hours by Sheriff Herndon, but after a thorough investigation, they were released, having satisfied the officers of their innocence.

The dead body was brought to the city by Undertaker Gordon last evening and the funeral will be held from the residence of W.P. Ward, a son-in-law of the deceased man, at 816 West Monroe Street, at 9 o'clock this morning and the interment will be in Evergreen Cemetery. The following gentlemen have been requested to act as pallbearers, and will meet at the office of undertaker Gordon at 8 o'clock this morning: W.A. Bours, W.D. Barnett, E.W. Gillen, M.A. Dzlalynski, F.J. Pons, W.T. Baya, G.H. Fleming, and Monroe Duval.

State Attorney Hartridge has taken active steps to ferret out the crime and discover the real murderers. He

will go to Sanderson today or tomorrow to make a personal investigation, and will do all in his power to bring the guilty parties to justice.

*From an unidentified newspaper this article appeared.*

*Appears to be Church related.*

#### ANOTHER MARTYR

The murder of a man because of his religious convictions and affiliation may be gratifying to the bigotry of some radical sectarians, but the assassin and not the martyred is the loss in such cases. The murder of Brother Canova in Florida because he was a Latter-day Saint, is an act the recompense for which will be required by a just God at the hands of the assassin and those who commend such work while the one whose life was taken in the cause of truth will receive the blessing of the God whom he served in the reward of life eternal. Yet it does seem strange that there are some people who call themselves Christians who have not realized the lesson that Jesus of Nazareth was put to death because his religious convictions and affiliation were not with the multitude that controlled.

*From an undated Times-Union Citizen in Jacksonville, Florida*

#### CANOVA MURDER MYSTERY

A Relative of the Accused Arrives Here Seeking Counsel. — It is Probable That Maj. St. Clair-Abrams Will Represent the Rigdons — Mr. Hill, Who Was With Canova at the Time of the Murder, Also Arrives Here.

Since the killing of George P. Canova, at Sanderson, June 5th of last year, Mr. W.P. Ward and other relatives of the deceased have been endeavoring to apprehend the dastardly murderers. The State and relatives offered rewards aggregating \$3,500, and detectives were employed to search for the perpetrators.

Saturday evening Mr. Ward received a telegram that W.P. Rigdon and his two sons were arrested at Sanderson, charged with the crime. Shortly after the murder Rigdon was arrested for this crime, but was released on habeas corpus proceedings, Judge Call holding the evidence against him as insufficient. In the meantime further evidence has been searched for, and it is said that this additional testimony led to the re-arrest of Rigdon and his sons.

The relatives of the murdered man will employ the best of legal talent to aid in the prosecution of the Rigdons.

T.A. Hill, a brother-in-law of the late Geo. P. Canova, and Benj. Rigdon, of Baker County, came to the city this morning, and confirmed the news that on Saturday



afternoon Wm. Rigdon and his two grown sons, George and Willie, were arrested and placed in jail. These men were indicted by the grand jury last Tuesday as being the assassins, or concerned in the assassination of Geo. P. Canova. Mr. Hill was at the time of the murder, riding along the road in a buggy with Mr. Canova, and they came to a gate, which was closed and when Mr. Hill got out to open the gate, Canova was fired upon and killed.

Mr. Rigdon came, it is said, to consult with attorneys for his brother and nephews. Maj. A. St. Clair-Abrams will probably represent the defendants, as he has already once done for the elder Rigdon, who was arrested on the same charge once before.

There was some talk of bringing the men here to be imprisoned, but it is thought that will not be done. Judge Call will probably be applied to for bail for the three imprisoned men.

NOTE: On July 17, 1986, S. Clyde Johnson, of Newberry in company with Elder James R. Boone, of Jacksonville, and Brother Donald Dobson, of Sanderson, travelled out south of Sanderson to try and locate the actual site of the martyrdom of President Canova. Brother Johnson once wrote of the event: "False reports of the intent of the Mormon missionaries in their work in the South had spread widely. Rumors with their ten thousand tongues had it that the local women would be converted and hauled away to Utah to become enmeshed in the harems of the Mormons. Doctrines which differed so outlandishly from those of the traditional hellfire and brimstone protestant doctrines ensconced in the religion of the Southerner added their fuel to the smoldering resentment until in some locales the pot burst and a tragedy occurred. Such was the case in Sanderson."

While in the company of Brother Donald Dobson, Brother Johnson learned that President Canova and his brother-in-law Thaddeus Hill had made a stop before the fatal incident occurred that night. He wrote of it as follows:

"The conference over and many miles to cover and darkness closing fast, the brethren began their way homeward. They stopped at the home of a non-member friend named Dobson who invited them to supper and to stay the night. President Canova, having a county commissioner meeting early the next day, declined the offer and headed home. Brother Dobson's father was the man who hosted President Canova and Elder Hill a few hours before the assassination. Brother Dobson was born eight years after the incident and was told of the murder by his father who pointed out to him the location.

"We drove south along State Road 229 to Clarence Dobbs Road and Brother Dobson said that intersection was the site. When he was a boy, two large pine trees had marked the location of the gate across the road and they stood somewhat off the now paved Road 229 to the east and just south of Clarence Dobbs Road.

NOTE: The place where President Canova and Elder Thaddeus Hill stopped to visit and have dinner was the farm home of Brother Dobson's grandfather, Seaborn Dobson and his wife Martha Ann Alford in Bradford County where the conference took place. Brother Dobson's father, George, was 16 years old at that time. He married Daisy Fraser in 1904 and apparently related the incident to his son Donald who was born in 1906, and other children through the years, as their daughter, Mattie, living in 1996 as this book goes to print, remembers being told of the incident occurring at the home of her grandparents.



Stanley Clyde Johnson of Newberry, visiting the assassination site of George Paul Canova at the southeast corner of Clarence Dobbs Road and State Road 229, south of Sanderson, Florida.

## FAMILY NOTES OF INTEREST

George Paul Canova had made a will when he was 50 years old leaving everything to Dianna and appointing her the executrix. At her death, the remainder of the estate was to be left to the children, share and share alike.

Alvin Chace wrote that after the death of her husband, Dianna Canova kept her home in Sanderson and went to Valdosta to get away from the tragedy. While there, her daughter Adaline studied music and attended public schools. During the time she was in Valdosta, Dianna bought out the Pons Mercantile store in Sanderson and placed her son Ed in charge of it. Her son Tom was called to serve a mission during this time. They remained in Valdosta about two years before returning to Sanderson. Later she moved to Lake City so the boys could attend college and Adaline could continue to study music and Spanish. Special teachers came to their home to teach. They returned to Sanderson



during the summertime. Adaline went to Atlanta and studied music under Dr. J. Lewis Brown, a composer. She stayed one year but went to town every Sunday to attend Sunday School and visit with the Mission president, Ben Rich. Later Dianna took her family to Douglas to be near her daughter, Annie Ward, and to send the younger children to school. Two years later she contracted tuberculosis and returned to Sanderson where she died the following year, on Nov 29, 1906. She requested Annie's husband, Warren Preston Ward, to speak at her funeral and President Callis dedicated the grave. Ed was appointed guardian of 16-year-old Nolan. Albert and Lonnie lived with older members of the family. Six of her sons, all who returned home when she was ill to care for her, served as pallbearers, Paul, Ed, Joe, George, Will, and Tom. Adaline, and her sister Kitty, went to Douglas to be with Annie following the funeral, and in the summer returned to Sanderson. While spending the Fourth of July week-end at Jacksonville, some friends introduced Adaline to her future husband, a senior dental student in Atlanta. She spent some time in Starke with her brother Paul and was frequently visited there by Henry Chace. She and Kitty moved back to Douglas while Henry finished dental school. He came to Douglas that Christmas to visit Adaline. After graduation they married.

Celestina, George Paul Canova's mother, was widowed for 16 years before she died on April 15, 1902, six years after her only son was murdered. She was buried in Evergreen Cemetery next to her husband.

Betsy Ann, Dianna's mother, lived until January 5, 1905. She had lived in Sanderson for six decades, three of them spent in widowhood. She was a faithful Baptist to the end. A few days before her death, she called her eight living children to her bedside, had them kneel and pray that God's will be done and not hers. It was stated in her obituary, 'All of her children, and grandchildren and friends, who were in reach of her during her last illness had done all that loving hearts and willing hands could do to relieve her suffering and administer to her every want during her last hours.'

George Paul had built his family a large, beautiful and spacious two story home, and there Dianna and her growing children and grandchildren enjoyed life until the end came November, 1906. All of her children returned home when illness struck and gave their full devotion. Dianna remained true and faithful to the Gospel, even though she lost some of her best friends. One friend wrote her a letter and signed it, 'your friend, but not if you remain a Mormon.' She received a letter from Mr. D.B. Turner denouncing the Mormons. Her answer to that letter can be found in the Baker County section in records pertaining to the early Church in Sanderson.

In years to come, after the death of Dianna, the house was sold. The new owner graciously allowed the family to come back for annual family reunions for many years.

And thus ends the saga of one of the greatest family stories in LDS southern history. It is hoped their devotion to family and the gospel will live on in their posterity forever.



*Old Canova home in Sanderson, Florida, located across railroad tracks on northwest corner where a post office stands present day. The horse is Prince, the same horse George Paul Canova was driving when he was assassinated June 5, 1898. Thaddeus Hill is holding the horse. The Mann family later owned this home.*



# ALVIN CANOVA CHACE

(The South's first stake president)

*'Now remember, Brother Chace, that mercy is better than judgment in making your decisions,'*

*Charles A. Callis*

Alvin Canova Chace was born into one of the most notable pioneering families in southern LDS history. Before his death in 1991, more than 600 people came to honor him at an appreciation reception in Macclenny where he spent the last years of his life. Many eyes were misty as they passed through the reception line to clasp his aged hand, and wish him well in his declining years. During the program, laurels of praise for this great individual poured freely from the pulpit as he smiled contentedly, not keenly aware of what was really being said for much of his hearing had faded. His happiness that day came from rubbing shoulders with 'the Saints', something of which he never grew tired. He was a man of great strength and character, possessing a volume of righteous virtues. In all, he was the epitome of Christ's most noble servants.

In 1981 he gave an oral interview to David Boone of Provo, Utah, in his home in Macclenny, Florida, conducted for the James Moyle Oral History Program of the Historical Department of the Church. That interview has contributed to this article, as has Brother Chace's personal papers, and personal history, handwritten over the years on scraps of yellowing paper and fading family history outlines.

To say he served in the Lord's Kingdom without hardships is an understatement. It is hoped that those reading the story of this great man will realize that he served with unwavering valor while dealing with life's human problems. From this story he would hope it would serve to be a tool for strengthening one's testimony and lengthening one's stride while serving in the Lord's Kingdom. To you, the reader, he would say, 'Keep the faith'.

Alvin Chace was the second of three sons born to William Henry and Adaline Canova Chace. He arrived April 16, 1912, on a small farm bordering the St. Johns River about six miles from South Jacksonville.

His mother Adaline grew up in an affluent LDS home in Sanderson, Florida. Before the turn of the century, traveling Mormon missionaries passed by the home of her aunt, Margaret Greene Hill, and one Elder said to the other, 'I feel that the blood of Israel is in this home.



**Adaline Canova Chase**

Let's stop.' Margaret's husband, Thaddaus Hill, had been waiting, hoping to find a church with apostles and prophets. Shortly after hearing the discussions, the couple joined the Church and Margaret shared her testimony with her sister Dianna who was married to a wealthy Sanderson businessman, George Paul Canova. Soon after the

couple also joined. Before the turn of the century the Hill and Canova families were dedicated to the gospel and its growth. In every way possible they assisted the traveling Elders, often feeding and giving shelter to as many as 25 at a time passing through for conferences. The following year of their conversion, his grandfather, George Canova, was murdered in cold blood for sheltering and feeding the Elders.

Alvin once wrote of his mother: "At the age of 17, she and her sister Kitty were baptized into the Church. As a child she grew up in a large family of two sisters and nine brothers. Her father was well-fixed and



**Adaline Canova Chase**



**William Henry Chace and Adaline Canova before their marriage in 1910.**

sent the girls off to school in Fernandina and Jacksonville to study. My mother once won a gold medal in school for playing the piano. After high school mother studied music at Cox College in Atlanta. She went to Utah on a train with (mission president) Ben E. Rich and his wife about 1908. In 1910 she married my father who was attending Atlanta Southern Dental College. They were introduced at Pablo Beach by a couple named Bridges. My father was an Episcopalian and all of his people were from England. They were wed in a little church in Jacksonville by one of the Elders of the Church."

About his family, he wrote.

"My brother Henry was born to them the following year while they were living at 10th and Laura Streets in Jacksonville. Then Father purchased 10 acres of land on the St. Johns River though he later sold four acres. When I was eight we moved to Ocala where we lived for about three years. While there we attended the Christian Church as there was no Mormon Church there. When the family moved back to Jacksonville about 1923 my father opened an office at 1037 Myrtle Ave. in Jacksonville. One day an Elder Jarman went up to my father's office and said to him, 'Dr. Chace, you are ready to join the Church.' And my father said, 'Yes, I am.' He had been taking the Book of Mormon and other literature from the Church to his office without the knowledge of my mother. My brother and father were baptized at the same time in the St. Johns River. I recall one time when my grandfather Chace was visiting. We got to talking about the Church and he asked my father, 'You're not a Mormon, are you, son?' And my father said, 'Yes, I am.' And my grandfather said, 'Son, I'm surprised at you. I'm surprised at you.' Prejudice was strong. I remember one missionary visiting our home with stripes where he had been beaten down in the town of Wildwood.

He remembered his baptism well, and wrote about it.

"I was baptized later in Trout River by the missionaries. When I was about seven I had asked my mother, 'How do you know this Church is true?' She said, 'Well, when you're baptized and receive the Holy Ghost, then you'll know it's true.' So after I was baptized and received the Holy Ghost, I never asked that question again, because I knew it was true."

His mother, an accomplished musician, played the organ and piano for years at the Church on Short Street and later at Park and Copeland. By this time horse and buggy days were over and her husband had bought a 1925 Buick which she used to drive her family to Church.

President Chace grew up like most young boys of that day. Of his youth, he wrote.

"My brother, Thomas Jefferson, died when he was a year old. He and my brother Henry had dysentery and both were in St. Luke's hospital when he died. World War I was going on from the time I was two to six years old. Father was about to be inducted when it ended. In 1918 when the great flu epidemic was going on, our family didn't escape. I was the only one who didn't get sick so Father sent me to milk the cow and while going through the gate the calf slipped in and beat me to the milk.

"Father owned a horse whose name was Nancy. He owned a buggy and a wagon which we used to go to Jacksonville and to work around the farm.

"I went to Mary Street School in the wagon and sometimes later a Model-T truck. Some of the things I enjoyed about school were the big marble games. I attended South Jacksonville Elementary school. When I was in the third grade my parents moved to Ocala where my father practiced dentistry. We moved back to Jacksonville when I was in the seventh grade and I attended John Gorrie Junior High to the ninth grade. We rode a trolley then. Our tickets cost four cents each. At lunch a lady set up a stand outside the school and the usual fare was macaroni and cheese, potato salad, and rice and gravy. My dad gave Henry and I four cents every day to ride the trolley. Those were wonderful days to Henry and I, getting home from school, going barefooted, rumbling through the woods which we were surrounded with. At night fox hounds and bear hounds could be heard. William, a colored hired man on the place, kept a lot of coons and opossums in a pen which he had caught, and we delighted in that.

He remembered his mother's dedication to the Church and wrote:

"In those days every Sunday my mother hitched the horse to the buggy and off to Church we went. It was about six miles to Jacksonville. When we arrived in South Jacksonville, the horse was tied to a tree, then we boarded the ferry into Jacksonville where we caught a street car to the Church. This operation took about four hours going to and from Church.

He was influenced concerning the Word of Wisdom at an early age.

"An interesting incident in my early life was when our cook, Martha, sent my brother Henry to get a chew of tobacco from William our hired hand. On the way back, Henry took a bite and became deathly sick. It not only cured him, but cured me for a lifetime of never wanting to taste tobacco.

He remembers his ordinations in the Church.

"I was blessed on October 24, 1912, by Elder B.J. Peacock, Jr. in the Jacksonville Branch of the Southern States Mission. Elder E.E. Mayo baptized me May 21,



1921, and I was confirmed the same day by John T. Harrington. I will always remember my baptism in Trout River. I wasn't too anxious to be baptized. I wasn't desirous of getting my head under the water. I think it was because I knew my mother was afraid of water. Some of my memories are of going to Primary in the little church building on the corner of Short and Claude Streets. Some of my teachers were Nellie Hill Maddock and Edna Grindstaff. When I was older, I remember William C. Copeland, Clifton Grindstaff, and Lawrence Maddock were my teachers. I was a counselor to Charles Latram in the Sunday School Superintendency when I was about seventeen years old. I won a public speaking contest at the Church when about eighteen. I represented our area in Atlanta where I lost. Richard R. Lyman was the attending authority and Charles A. Callis was the Mission President. Homer Yarn won.

"I graduated at age 18 from Landon High School in 1930 during the Depression Era. Jobs were hard to get. I worked on Saturday at the A&P grocery store usually going to work at 7 a.m. and working until 2 a.m. the next morning for \$1.50 a day. I got fired because I weighed the tub butter too close as the manager wanted to fudge a little on the weight. Then I got a job at Pigley Wigley at \$10 a week. They cut our pay without letting us know to \$7.50. I quit and attended Jones College for about three months studying typing, English and shorthand. I attended college at Jacksonville University for two years majoring in Spanish, German and French. One professor said if we didn't have common sense we surely better get an education. My brother and I decided to go look for a job and I prayed about it. The first place I looked was Kresses 5 and 10 cent store. The manager, a Mr. Black, asked me if I could go to work right then. I worked for them for two and a half years. They paid me \$15 a week which wasn't a bad salary for the Depression years. We worked from 7:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day except Sunday. Herbert Hoover was president of the United States at the time. He was defeated by Franklin Delano Roosevelt who started a number of projects to put people to work like the WPA, CCC Camps and NRA, which was the National Recovery Act. That required we work only 48 hours a week, so my hours were shortened.

"Charles A. Callis was the mission president over the Southern states mission at the time. He was released about 1933 when he was called into the Council of the Twelve Apostles. LeGrand Richards took his place. He started calling the loyal young men and women on a mission, some going for three months, some six months, etc. I was called to go and stayed for eight months serving in the South Carolina area around Walterboro, Ridgeland, and Charleston.. Brother Joseph Copeland

was called to go at the same time and we served as companions at times. One of the requirements of missionaries was to hold street meetings. I liked to go to the courthouse yard to hold one as we usually had a ready made audience there. However, at times we stood on a corner and just started singing one of the Church hymns. Then the Elder in charge called on the other to preach. Normally we had some people stop to listen. We met some wonderful people and I loved them all.

"I had been ordained a priest on October 5, 1930, by Elder V.C. Mortensen and ordained an elder October 15, 1933, by E.R. Yarn.

"When I returned home from my mission, I worked for Brother O.H. Hawkins in his grocery store at 16th and Main Streets. Then I worked for Montgomery Ward a couple of years. At times I did some welding for the war effort.

Like most normal boys he was interested in girls. And he always had a sense of humor about them. He wrote of this experience.

"Most of my courting was with church girls. The last one I went with was Alzada Beasley. We had a wonderful romance, I will call the Great Romance. The first time I saw her I was a counselor in the Sunday School superintendency at the church at Park and Copeland. She was a slender, pretty, English-type girl with a very attractive smile. Sometime around this time I was, or either I became, engaged to a fine girl attending the LDS Church. But she decided to marry another fellow instead who had a little more money than me. Later I became interested in Alzada and went to her home to see her. I can remember her father was sitting on the front porch smoking a cigar. I didn't know whether he would kick me off the porch, or not, but later I came to the conclusion he wanted to marry his two daughters off to a couple of fine young men.

"She went on a mission when she was 17 years old, and I attended her farewell. She was gone for a year laboring in the Tallahassee area under Mission President, Merrill Clayson.. I sent her a box of candy once. When she returned, I got in touch with her. As I filled my church assignments she would go with me so you might say I courted her



**Alzada Beasley Chace**

on assignments. She knew the latest fashions and dressed well. In those days girls wore hats and she had some cute ones to wear. Sometimes we went to a show, played tennis or attended the Mutual Improvement Association programs at the church. We went together for about nine months before I got the courage to ask her to marry me. I remember we were standing at the door of her home on Rosselle Street after I took her home from a date one night. She accepted, and thus my life became a pleasant experience as I loved Alzada very much.”

Prior to his marriage, he had been serving as the Mutual Improvement Association President. When the first district was organized in 1937, the newly called district president, James R. Boone, called him to serve as a counselor.



***Alvin and Alzada Beasley Chace***

The young couple married April 22, 1939, in Macclenny, Florida. They didn't consummate their marriage until two months later when they travelled, properly chaperoned, to the Salt Lake Temple where they were sealed on June 4th. Writing of their four-day honeymoon afterwards, he wrote, 'Thus unfolded one of the great romances of the century'.

The couple first made their home with his mother, later moving into a home of their own.

During this time he bought a G.E. welding machine. For six months he practiced welding every day after his work was through at Montgomery Ward. Finally he quit

Montgomery Ward and went to work as a welder on ships being built in Daytona. Later he worked for a boiler works and at the Jacksonville Ship Yards on the Liberty ships.

In 1943, when the war reached its peak, he was inducted into the Army. He was placed in a signal outfit which was attached to a railroad battalion. After his training at New Orleans the employees working with Alzada in a Colonel's office, took up a collection and bought her a ticket so she could accompany him to his next interlude at Fort Snelling in Minnesota. Alzada obtained a room there and occasionally her husband could come home for the night. Before being shipped overseas, he was given a furlough to go home for two weeks. He and Alzada boarded a train packed with service men for Jacksonville. That's where they were when they received word that the invasion of Europe had begun with England as the main base. They returned to St. Paul and while he was away on training assignments Alzada became acquainted with Church members locally. In September of 1944 he received notification he would be leaving for Europe. The wives were allowed to come to the base to say good bye not knowing if they would ever see each other again. For the following twenty-one months he saw many invasions and fierce battles working in Belgium, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, England, Italy, and Austria. Destruction was everywhere. When he saw a dead soldier's body lay in the railroad yard for several days, he thought to himself, 'Some mother's boy that she loved'. More so than the war, and its effect, Alvin wrote about his experiences with the Church on foreign soil. While overseas he furloughed once in England and looked up the mission home where he found Hugh B. Brown was serving as mission president. He also got to visit Paris where he described seeing the flashing of lights as battles progressed. Once while he was in Austria at a testimony meeting with members of the Church, he was joined by an Elder Dalebout who had been on a mission in Jacksonville. While in Salzburg cigarettes were selling as high as \$4 a carton. All service men received two cartons a week free, and since he didn't smoke, he decided to sell his for extra cash.

Of this event he penned.

"Well an Improvement Era arrived just in time in which Elder Harold B. Lee said, 'Don't take advantage of the weaknesses of the people,' so this ruined business for me. I traded my cigarettes for candy, soap, and etc., which I gave to the Latter-day Saints in the area."

His thirst for knowledge continued though a war surrounded him. He once hired an elderly lady to teach him French while in one location for three months. He had a copy of the Book of Mormon in French and he studied from that. Before he left, the lady whose name



was Annie Ruthgeber, wanted to be baptized. He had to leave before it could be done. While in Basel, Switzerland, he visited the mission headquarters where a President Zimmer was serving a mission. He often mailed copies of the Book of Mormon in French to many of the French speaking people he met. Always the missionary, he never missed an opportunity to ask the golden question and bear his testimony.

Meanwhile, back at home in the states, Alzada had been given an opportunity to serve a second mission while he was away. She used her allotment money of \$110 a month for her expenses.

His service experiences are detailed in great length in his personal handwritten history which is on record in the Church Historical library in Salt Lake City and BYU Library archives. It is filled with details of the opportunities he had to share the gospel with service men and women, and civilians he met of every nationality and race. He wrote of opportunities he took to look up the Church where ever he travelled throughout Europe and experiences as he mingled with the Saints. His tremendous faith, strength, and zeal for the gospel is made manifest in his writings about the things he experienced.

In 1945 he came home from Europe. In 1947 he passed his real estate examination and that is the business he remained in for the balance of his life. Previously he had attended Orlando Junior College taking an insurance course and once had started a correspondence course in law. He always had a thirst for knowledge.

After his discharge, he was called to serve as branch president in St. Augustine. About that he said, "I had T.C. Copeland as my counselor and we drove down there each weekend to take care of the business which was sort of known as the Isle of Patmos. I don't think we had over fifty members down there, but we had some wonderful experiences."

Then Charles A. Callis ordained him to the office of high priest on January 19, 1947, at the age of 35 years. He was not aware that the 'brethren' had been waiting for his return from Germany. The first stake in the South was being organized and they needed him to serve as its president. About the experience, he wrote.

"I recall when they were interviewing and looking for a stake president, I had sort of a premonition that I would be called for some reason. I didn't want to be, but of course, you don't turn down jobs when the Lord calls you. It was quite an overwhelming call as I'd never lived in a stake and I'd never lived in a ward. I'd been raised up in the mission, but of course we had district presidents and a district council and various offices that could help to train a person for this particular calling. In calling me to the position, President Callis said, 'Now remember, Brother Chace, that mercy is better than

judgment in making your decisions,' and that was a fine statement to make. I had been planning to go up to the University of Florida to complete my education, but President Harold B. Lee, who was here at the time, said to me, 'Now, Brother Chace, if you'll accept this position in the Church, you'll never regret it and you'll never lose anything by not going to school and accepting this responsibility.' I did, and I have never lost anything. I've been given many privileges that I would never have received if I hadn't been in the stake presidency. General Authorities came down, at that time, to most every conference. The stake had about 1830 members at the time. We had wards in Waycross and Axson, in the south part of Georgia, and then we went down south as far as Palatka and over west as far as Lake City and then east to the Atlantic Ocean. We had a lot of territory to cover.



**Alvin C. Chace**  
**First President of**  
**Florida Stake**

"The old stalwarts in the area were called into various positions such as the high council and bishoprics of wards. Brother James R. Boone had been on a mission for four years and was a little more experienced than the rest of us. When the district was organized he helped a great deal to get things in shape for this stake. Heber Meeks had been a mission president during the war years in this area and he was a big help in organizing. A great deal of credit was due to the people that had lived previously in the area who were steadfast in the Church and had gone through persecutions.

"The meetings at the time of the organization were conducted by Elder Callis. He had stayed out at the Jenkins home while he was here, but early in the week that he was organizing the stake, he stayed in the church at Park and Copeland. He slept upstairs where the missionaries had once slept. He looked like he had perfect health, because when he went up the steps, he went up them two at a time. However, a few days after the stake was organized, he went to Brother A.O. Jenkin's home for the night. Later Brother Jenkins told us, 'I could hear him talking all night. The next morning I asked him if he would like to go see my jewelry store. He said

he would. He said he didn't have any more to do.' So they got into Brother Jenkins's car and when they came to a place called Five Points, Elder Callis said to Brother Jenkins. 'Last night Grace'.....and his head fell over and he passed away. Grace was his wife and she had recently died."

The new president settled into his new position quickly. The funeral was held for President Callis a few days following in the Park and Copeland Streets Chapel where a large gathering said their farewell to an old and respected friend. Afterwards, the new stake presidency got busy.

"We had new bishoprics, new high councilmen and there was the question of training everybody in their various capacities. At that time we didn't have much material that was sent out from the Church. In talking to President Lee to get some advice on these things, he said we were just kind of on our own and would have to figure these things out for ourselves. Of course, we had the advantage of every three months having one of the General Authorities from the Council of the Twelve with us, so we didn't lack for somebody to help us to determine what needed to be done. We worked hard. "

And thus began fourteen years of dedicated service in that calling which would land his name in the laurels of southern LDS history.

He rubbed shoulders with the mighty men of Zion who came regularly in those days to offer support and direction. Letters from prophets and apostles bulged his files, and their visits in his home swelled his memory. He stood in humbled awe as he heard their prayers in his presence. Some of them were Presidents George Albert Smith, David O McKay, Harold B. Lee, Howard Hunter, Joseph Fielding Smith, Ezra Taft Benson, Spencer W. Kimball, Matthew Cowley, Bruce McConkie, Henry D. Moyle, Joseph Wirthlin and on and on. Most of their wives were with them and entertained graciously by Alzada. These were spiritual experiences he never forgot, and because of the blessings he reaped from them, he was never without a prepared talk, thought, or discussion.

Big and important decisions were made during his tenure as the South's first stake president. During this time the stake purchased a 200 acre irrigation farm in Palatka from the Tilton family for \$80,000 to be used for Church welfare purposes. They raised potatoes, and Woody Tilton, who served on the high council, oversaw the operation as he had the assignment of welfare. The Tiltons let the Church use their potato sorting warehouse at no cost. Even though the stake was new and small, under his leadership they received a plaque every year for reaching the required goal of getting the Improvement Era into the home of members. He

worked long, hard hours and was repaid abundantly with spiritual rewards. Home teaching was up among the first ten in the Church among the stakes of this size. The seminary program was started, and under the leadership of a mission president, fifty to sixty members were serving a stake mission. There were an approximate 100 plus baptisms a year, and many young men left to serve honorable missions representing the stake. He kept enthusiasm at a high with goals in mind and various projects going on. One was the building of a stake tabernacle that would be constructed on Hendricks Avenue on the city's southside. Two thousand two hundred people attended the morning service on November 25, 1956, when David O McKay dedicated the building. Another 1900 came in the afternoon. More than 14,000 hours of labor had been donated to the building of the edifice.

Another challenge he had as the new stake president was to encourage the members to attend the temple although it was 2,000 miles away in Salt Lake City. Of this he wrote.

"When the stake was created, the officers in the stake went to the conferences of the Church in Salt Lake. Most of the time we had to drive out because in that day we didn't have the plane service. So all of us went out in automobiles, and we made every effort to carry with us people who wanted to go to the temple but that weren't able to go financially. A great number were able to go then, because all the bishops and all the stake presidents went to these stake conferences of the Church usually twice a year. We had people taking their vacations to go and do temple work which increased the genealogy and temple work. We established some genealogical libraries. The seminaries helped to get the young people to marry in the temple. Usually when they were going out to the temple by themselves, the Brethren suggested they marry here and be sealed in the temple when they got there, in order not to cause any talk about their going without being married.

"When I was released 14 years later there were approximately 5000 members. During my calling, I'll have to say that my biggest asset was my wife. She always supported me in my Church work."

During the time he was serving as stake president, the couple's marriage was childless. Since their marriage they had been trying to adopt children. Eight years later they were successful. Soon five choice children became their family. First came Juana, then Deborah, David LeGrand, named for the two apostles. Then came Gina and lastly James Henry they lovingly called Jimbo. They faithfully held home evenings and taught the children about the gospel.

Upon his release as stake president on March 1, 1961, he served for a year and a half as counselor to



Brother Karl Lyman, mission president. Then in February of 1963, he received a phone call from President Henry D. Moyle.

"How would you like to fill a mission?" the apostle asked him.

"Of course I would!" he told the apostle.

They gave him 30 days to get his affairs in order which included closing his real estate business, finding someone to care for his rental properties, his home, storing furniture, and preparing his wife and five children, ages two to sixteen, for the new experience they would have as he served as president of the East Central States Mission headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky. The next three years would be the highlight of their life as the couple loved missionary work. Great details of their service in this calling is told in his handwritten history.

There is little doubt but what he was one of the Lord's greatest missionaries, not afraid to tell others about the Gospel of Jesus Christ where ever he went. In an airport restaurant in Tennessee he asked the golden question to a waitress. Three months later during a branch conference, a president Clay, who was in the Nashville Branch presidency, asked him if recognized the lady with the child that just walked in. He didn't. "Well, she's the lady you asked the golden question at the airport." He asked the golden question to the man who delivered groceries to the mission home, and the man and his family eventually joined the Church. About 6 a.m. one cold morning he stopped at a service station. It was so cold he decided to go inside to pay the attendant instead of having the attendant come out. He asked the golden question that morning of the attendant, who agreed to have the missionaries come, and about three months later the Elders brought him news that a 'Mr. Cox' he has asked the golden question to in the service station, along with his wife and three children, had joined the Church. Those are but only a minute few of the opportunities he took to share the greatest gift he possessed, his knowledge and living testimony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

While on his mission he visited the site where two Mormon missionaries lost their lives. He wrote of the occasion.

"The town, called something like Hobenwald, is near Columbia, Tennessee. The mission sent two older missionaries, Elders Berry and Gibbs, to try and allay some of the prejudices in the community. At the home of a Sister Condor on a Sunday morning in 1884, a mob attacked the Elders, killing them and the two Condor boys who tried to defend them. A tombstone is out in the woods near where the incident occurred. The stone

is inscribed with this statement of the Savior, "Greater love hath no man than he lay down his life for his friend." Elder Gibbs had 14 children. President B.H. Roberts was the mission president, and he disguised himself as a bum and went and obtained the bodies of the two missionaries. He put them on the train at Hobenwald and sent them to Salt Lake where the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve met the train."

When his mission calling ended, he came home to Jacksonville in July of 1966.

Then he was called to serve on the high council and then bishop of Jacksonville Second Ward. He was only in that position three months when he was called to be a regional representative of the Twelve. He accepted that calling, but in the three months he had served as bishop he had brought the ward home teaching program up from 70 to 90 percent.

In later years, commenting on the growth of the Church in the South he quickly said, "I believe we are ready to advance right on. We have a lot of young people that are coming up in the Church and they're going to seminary and they're going to BYU and Ricks College. We have a lot of young men going on missions, and that's a real fine place to establish young people into the work for the Lord."



***Alzada Beasley and Alvin Canova Chace  
June 5, 1966***

Those words and predictions rang true in Alvin Chace's heart, mind and soul. How he longed for these blessings to be a part of his own family. With their two sons and three daughters, they had lived the example, and taught the truths. He had faithfully served his Church and his hopes were high for a celestial family. As the years passed and the children formed their own ideas and passions, he felt the need to make changes on their behalf. With their older daughter now married to a fine young man in the temple, he decided to purchase 13 acres of beautiful old nursery land in rural Baker

County, land of his legacy, and move into the beautiful old Victorian home nestled beneath the spreading magnolia trees that surrounded it. His daughter Deborah married an active Church member from a pioneer LDS family following their move.

Probably no one will ever know his heartfelt sentiments as he asked for a release from his regional representative position when he felt his three younger children needed him home more. If he expected the quiet, tranquil surroundings of his new abode to bring the inward peace and harmony of the gospel teachings into the lives of those he held dearest, his quest was not reached. Like many of God's greatest servants, Adam, Lehi, and Alma,



***The Alzada and Alvin Canova Chace Family***

*Daughters, left to right: Deborah, Juana and Gina. Sons: David and James.*

some of his children would choose to go another way. Like Lehi of old, his hopes for them never failed, his love genuinely unconditional and his faith never diminished, as he maintained a constant safe harbor and warm hearth for each of them to return. Despite the problems, there was never any doubt as to the children's constant love and respect for their parents. And the crowning glory of their parents has been the children and the beautiful grandchildren they now have to carry on their names and legacy.

In the late 60's it was a difficult time to raise children, and along with many other parents, Alvin and Alzada had their share of problems with their last three children. Once Alvin asked Alzada if she had known the heartaches they would have would she have adopted these children. Her reply was, "I don't have to even think about the answer to that — Yes! I would have run to get them."

"Oh, me too!" was his reply.

The innumerable contacts he made, testimonies he bore, and people he met and asked the golden question, is unknown to human minds, but surely recorded by angels who chronicled his progress and work on earth. No man passed his way that he didn't inquire of him, "What do you know about the Mormon Church and would you like to know more?" Countless Book of Mormons, tracts, and other Church-related materials have been given to others by him in hopes they would be so blessed in their lives and share in what he knew was his priceless legacy.

With a thick mane of beautiful white hair crowning his head, and clear twinkling eyes filled with love, he

possessed an almost angelic transparent complexion. He was constant in his faith and testimony and his quest for missionary work was never ending. He maintained faith and sought for ways to make the end a better finale for those he loved. As his health failed and his last days were spent bedridden, his smile never diminished, his steadfast testimony never faded, and his end was as at the beginning...holding fast to the iron rod where he remained loyal to all he knew to be true all the days of his remarkable life.

#### A TRIBUTE AMONG MANY

After Alvin Chace's death in December 1991, his wife Alzada received a letter from his first stake Clerk, George Hill, who had, with his wife visited her in May of 1992. In part, he wrote:

"While spending many hours as a clerk in meetings with Alvin and his counselors, I gained many lessons as a young man that stood me in good stead when positions came to me where it was my responsibility to be the one making decisions.

"President Chace's equanimity always prevailed. I never saw him exhibit any anger or impatience. He was always charitable and when others were intemperate or showed lack of good judgement, he always attributed others' shortcomings to a 'mistake of the head and not of the heart.'

"When the original Florida Stake was organized, all the Stake Presidency were just in their thirties. As stake clerk I was in my early twenties. Only Coleman Madsen



had ever even lived in a stake before.

"Many hours were spent simply reading the 'Handbook of Instructions' and pondering each paragraph. It was a lonely feeling, especially for Alvin as we ponderously began to act as a Stake of Zion.

"In less than a year, however, the Florida Stake was ranked among the top stakes in its population category.

"I have forgotten how many counselors Pres. Chace wore out during his 14 years as stake president. No one knows better than you how many hours, days and weekends your husband devoted to his callings. There is no calculating how many miles he travelled in a stake much larger than the stakes are now.

"The Gainesville Stake was then only a small branch meeting in the Odd Fellows Hall with Murray Shields as the president. Lake City was just a small unit with 50 or so people attending. It is, of course, now a stake of its own. That was a long drive back from Axson, Georgia, on a Sunday evening.

"Each July 24th..or a Saturday close to that date...saw Pioneer Day celebrations at San Mateo. Usually there was a rodeo and big barbecue provided by the Tilton clan. I recall the sisters spending the night in the little San Mateo chapel with the men folks sleeping on cots out under the spreading oak trees.

"As a natural inheritance from his mother, perhaps, Alvin was always able to extract maximum mileage from any assets that came into his possession. If he had any talent in handling personal funds, it was multiplied many times when he administered Church funds. It was interesting to see how he could in just a few minutes talking with auxiliary leaders, show them how to pare down proposals for financing their upcoming activities. A \$300 proposal would leave their meeting at only \$75 or \$80. The amazing thing was, the auxiliary folks usually felt good about being put through the wringer and agreed to the decision.

"I personally owe much to Alvin for the many opportunities he afforded me to have church experiences that have meant so much to me in late times. It is recognized now how little I had to offer as qualifications in serving in bishoprics and on the high council as a very young man still in my twenties. Of necessity in those days, he had to reach out and take chances on people in calling them to responsibilities.

"It has been said that it is better to be respected than to be loved. Alvin had the great advantage of having both respect and love.

"On several occasions, I witnessed people voicing profound exception to Pres. Chace's decisions and take it personally. Without exception, they all returned later to apologize and admit to his wise direction. He was always modest and appreciative of their change of heart.

"Pres. Chace could not have served so well for so many years without you as his understanding companion. It was not always possible for you to travel with him, especially after your children came into your home.

"The time you spent in the mission in Kentucky must have been a very choice experience for both you and Pres. Chace. He was one of the first, if not the first, mission presidents called from the South. A few have since followed but he was one of the first so honored. There must be several hundred leaders in the Church now who benefitted by his wise and competent leadership.

"If you live long enough you may become old, too, but so far you have held father time at bay. Your effervescent spirit will never grow old and your physical body belies the years you have marked off your personal calendar."

With love, George and Frances Hill, Roanoke, Va.

*The above letter was just one of many like tributes paid this great man. Is it any wonder he was so honored by more than 600 Saints and friends and their tears flowed so readily at the surprise reception given in appreciation for his labor in the Kingdom? It would take the undefiled language of Adam to properly do justice to this giant among mortal men, but in the annals of Heaven we can rest assured his story will receive its just reward.*  
LMS

Sources for the Canova family history have been taken from:

Alvin Canova Chace family and personal history, Macclenny, Florida

Alzada Beasley Chace personal interview, Macclenny, Florida

Viola Canova Clark, St. George, Utah, author of Life Story Thomas Raymond Canova

Cassette recording of the Canova family history by Thomas Raymond Canova

Florida Times Union news articles

# WILLIAM OCEANUS COPELAND

Jacksonville, Duval, Florida

*The following story of William O. Copeland of Lawty, Florida, is taken from a June 19, 1981, oral interview with David Flake Boone of the BYU historical department in Provo, Utah. It was made possible by a grant from the James Moyle Oral History Program Trust Fund. My personal conversations with President Copeland in October 1996 provided an update, with corrections to the original interview and continuing remarks concerning his life and activities in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. lms.*

Like numerous other Latter-day Saints in the area, I have always known that the name of Copeland in south Georgia and north Florida is synonymous with service in the Latter-day Saint Church. Members of this family have served faithfully, devotedly, and honorably, since the Church had its beginning in the South.

At the turn of the century William O. Copeland's grandfather, George Flemming Copeland, joined the Church in Camden County, Georgia. The date was June 22, 1900. Seven years later, on June 15, 1907, his father, Thomas Charles Copeland, entered the waters of baptism. That background has made him a part of the Church's development and activity since his birth on October 12, 1918, in Jacksonville, Florida. It prepared him for the trusted offices he has held and served in with greatness.

It was in Camden County, Georgia, at the turn of the century, when his father and grandfather were walking down a country road to attend a meeting where the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were preaching. The strains of the first Latter-day Saint song met them as they approached. They had never heard Mormon songs before. Thomas Charles Copeland told his son years later, that when they arrived home that night, his father had been so impressed with the music he had heard, he was able to sing all the songs from memory to his children. He was converted and baptized immediately following that meeting. George's wife, Kesiah Louvenia Beckham Copeland, died before joining the Church. She perished when her long dress caught fire while cooking.

His parents, Thomas Charles and Nora Hattie (Musgrove) Copeland moved from Camden County to Jacksonville sometime before his birth. From their 15 children, 13 lived to be adults and became stalwart members of the Church. They attended the LDS Church on the corner of Short and Claude Streets where



**William O.  
Copeland  
President of the  
Jacksonville  
Florida West  
Stake.**

they had many experiences with the early missionaries and Church members.

"My mother always loved to feed the missionaries during conference and other meetings when they gathered in the Jacksonville area," he said.

"Church attendance was difficult for a while, because we moved eight miles away from the chapel, with no transportation. To keep from attending no meetings at all, our parents took us to a small Baptist church until they were able to get an automobile for transportation. I can remember that my father took us to the site of what we call the 'new church,' a lovely chapel on Park and Copeland Streets. The first time I saw this site, they had dug a large hole for the basement. I had never seen such a hole before in my life. This chapel was finished and we were using it at the time I was baptized October 26, 1926.

"There were some neighbors around us that were members of the Church, not all were active. My father was instrumental in having the missionaries come out once a week and hold cottage meetings. We would gather up friends and neighbors, members and non-members, whoever would come, and the missionaries would hold services in our home. This was the beginning of a new congregation, because we moved from these cottage meetings to a regular Primary for children, later a Sunday School for all, and finally a dependent branch, the Wesconnett Branch. This was still dependent on the Jacksonville Branch, which for a long time was the only branch in the city of Jacksonville.

"I left to serve a mission when I was still seventeen. I went on what was called a short-term mission, assigned to the South Carolina District. President LeGrand Richards was the mission president at the time. He was a leader in missionary work, a most dynamic and very spiritual man. He influenced my life greatly and I loved him very much.

"When I returned home I continued in Church



work. Still a lad, I was the M-Men teacher, even though I was about the same age as those who attended the class. In the first twelve months after I returned from my mission, I held seven different offices. They included secretary for MIA, M-Men teacher, counselor in the Sunday School superintendency, superintendent of Sunday School, and counselor in the branch presidency. Then I was called to be president of a new, very small branch in East Jacksonville. After just a short time in this office, I was called to be district superintendent of the Young Men's Mutual.

"During the time I held this office, I could tell that a major war was building up, so I joined the Naval Reserve. I went through WW II, finally being transferred from the East Coast to the West Coast, and traveled about the Pacific aboard a ship. I made the invasions on Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Almost immediately after these invasions the war ended and after discharge, I returned to Jacksonville.

"Before the war I had met Mildred Dansie of Salt Lake City. We corresponded and each year I made an annual visit to SLC to see her. In May of 1942, while I was in the service, she came to Jacksonville on vacation. My father, who was branch president of the Jacksonville Branch, married us in our home on May 30th. I was 24 years old and she was 21. We left immediately that night by train and travelled to Salt Lake City where we were sealed on June 3rd in the Salt Lake Temple. By the time I returned home at the end of the war we had been blessed with three youngsters. Eventually we became the parents of ten children."

Both before the war and since, Brother Copeland has worked as a railroad mechanic, beginning in 1936 with the Seaboard Railroad.

"When the first stake was organized in Florida, January 19, 1947, I was called as the first bishop of the Wesconnett Ward. After other wards were organized, and we changed the names to numbers, Wesconnett Ward became the Jacksonville Fourth Ward.

"I was in this position as bishop about three years and then was called to the stake high council. I served on the council possibly twelve years, and then served as counselor to President Henry V. Jenkins, the stake president. I served with him as second and then first counselor for possibly ten years. During this time the stake was divided and the Jacksonville East Stake was organized, with President L. Blaine Vorwaller as the new stake president. Shortly after this division, President Jenkins was called as a mission president to England, and I was called in his place to be president of what became the Jacksonville West Stake. I served in this position about six years and was released to be patriarch in the Gainesville Florida Stake.

"As a very young boy my father was active in church and served in branch presidencies from time to time. He was the branch president at the Park Street chapel. We didn't have custodial service in the Church as they have now, and because he was the branch president his family did the janitor work. I can remember that he would take us on his way to work on a Saturday morning, put us out, and my older brother and I would walk to the chapel. We'd wait until daylight so we could see how to sweep and clean. When we completed cleaning the chapel, we'd walk the eight miles back home.

"In school there were very few members of the Church. Fact is, in our classes we were possible the only one that was a Mormon in the whole class. We didn't have real persecution as was known in some parts of the country, but we were shunned a little. It was a lot easier not to mention church than it was to put up with the opposition that we did encounter.

"On my mission in South Carolina, persecution was a little stronger. There had been extreme cases of persecution not long before I was there. The only thing that we really encountered was opposition to the principles and doctrines of the Church. There was no physical abuse, nor persecution in that manner. Before I left for my mission I had heard about some cases where the missionaries had been driven out of town by men on horses with cow whips and horsewhips. There was no physical abuse during the whole time I was on a mission. My missionary experience was in the country and I was raised with country people, so as a Southerner what I encountered as a missionary was much like what I had known at home.

"Fact is, at the time we had what we called the home missionary program. A Melchizedek Priesthood member would be assigned to be the unit leader. He would have a sister or two assigned to the unit and also an Aaronic Priesthood member for the missionary unit. We would hold cottage meetings much like the missionaries held cottage meetings. This was the reason that I was able to go so young and begin a mission, because I was actually doing missionary work as a very young boy before I was ever called as a missionary. The experiences were much like those that I had at home.

"My experience in this local missionary unit was during the time that I was in my last year of high school. I can remember that my father was very energetic in the program and very diligent. We averaged as many as three cottage meetings a week, plus our Sunday activity and our Mutual attendance. I can remember that I went to all of these meetings and took my part in speaking, praying, and singing with the others. It was almost amazing to me that with all this experience my grades never faltered. My grades stayed up high, average and

above. This extra activity in the missionary work never detracted or hindered at all.

"I went into the mission field immediately after graduating from high school. I was still 17 and a priest. I turned 18 after I had been on a mission about three months. After becoming 18 years of age, President LeGrand Richards, who was the mission president, called me in for an interview as we met at a district conference. He wanted to know if I planned on staying in the Church. I told him that I did. He wanted to know if I planned on staying active in the Church. I assured him I did. He said, 'Well, I think we ought to make you an elder. You're doing the work of an elder.' So then he had my district president, Joseph P. Butterfield, ordain me to the Melchizedek Priesthood, to the office of elder.

"As I mentioned, my parents had a large family, 13 children living, and we were all raised in the Church. An older brother finished school in 1935 and because of the Depression had to leave home to find employment. He made his way to Alabama and stayed there.

"In 1938, after I had returned from my mission, as a family we decided to go to Salt Lake City to the temple and be sealed as a family. Now this was quite an accomplishment at that time, because of the large family we had and because we were still in Depression time conditions. My father worked for the railroad and was able to travel on railroad passes. I remember we got a hotel room right close to the temple where we could walk back and forth to the temple. As we gathered in the sealing room, I remember that the temple president who was to seal us wanted to know if that was all of the children, and my parents said that was all. Then he asked, 'Are there any that have died?' 'Oh yes, there is one,' they said. Then they went out and got a proxy to stand for that son that had died in his childhood. Then the temple president was all ready to seal us again, and he asked the second time if there were any others that had died, and then they remembered the first child that died as an infant. It was as if it were direct inspiration that the temple president checked to be sure that all were represented. Then another proxy was brought in and the sealing completed.

"I remember that our parents knelt at each end of the altar and the children filled in on both sides. I remember that the altar was filled so that there was no room for the baby, so she sat on the altar while we were sealed as a family in the temple. That was August 31, 1938.

"After I returned home from my mission in South Carolina in December 1936, the Church leaders had obtained permission for us to go down to Hemming Park in the middle of downtown Jacksonville to preach. There was a small bandstand there in the middle of the

park. Brother Canny Forsythe from Springfield and I had the assignment from the priesthood quorum to go down every Friday afternoon and have preaching service in this little bandstand in the middle of the park.

"It was interesting, because the older people would be sitting around in the park with their checker games, and we would have to speak loud enough so that they could hear us. The interesting part was that we could see them move from one bench to a bench closer and then a bench closer until they finally got up close enough that we were actually speaking to them. This was kind of a frightening experience for one so young, but it was a satisfying experience, because we could see that they were interested and they listened to our sermons. I don't know that any were baptized because of this activity, but I do know that we were accepted favorably in the park.

"I remember we had lady missionaries at the time, and they would come help us sing and pray, but they begged not to be called on to preach. Sometimes we did anyhow, because they had a message also. We were finally released from this assignment which was held on Friday afternoons about 5 o'clock for a year or two.

"We still had an ongoing missionary program for many years. Julian Grindstaff, who later served as the patriarch in the Jacksonville West, had the assignment to have a weekly radio program. He did a very professional job, providing a radio program for a number of years. I'm sure that it was effective in teaching the city the principles and doctrine of the Church.

"In October of 1940 I went on active duty in the Naval Reserve. As I finished my tour of duty in the Jacksonville area and was transferred to the West Coast, President James R. Boone, working with the Church military committee, mailed me a servicemen group leader's card and authorized me to be a group leader wherever I was transferred to. I was up and down the West Coast in the service and finally left from the California area to go overseas on a ship and was assigned to the ship's company.

"After we left to go overseas I went to the chaplain and told him that I was assigned to serve the Mormon fellows that were aboard. He told me to go ahead and look after their needs, because he knew that he couldn't do anything for us. When we left the Hawaiian Islands we began holding services on the ship. We put up notices on the bulletin board and I'd go around humming and whistling Latter-day Saint tunes. If I heard a name that sounded like a Latter-day Saint name I would stand in the pay line until that fellow came through. This was the way that we contacted all the LDS men on the ship.

"After leaving Pearl Harbor to go on deeper into the war zone, we held formal meetings on the ship. There



were six or eight of us that met regularly, and then as the Marines came aboard we picked up four or five more that were with the Fourth Marines.

His efforts to reach the LDS service men paid off in big dividends when one of the enlisted men, who had been inactive as a member, visited one of their meetings. When called upon to bear his testimony, he told the group he was not worthy to be in their presence. But he continued to attend the meetings and after the group returned from their tour of duty he asked Brother Copeland about tithing. He had not paid tithing in a long time. Brother Copeland advised him to speak with his bishop about it, saying that he would most likely be told to just start paying. That's exactly what his bishop advised, but the serviceman still not feeling good about it, went to the bank and took out enough to pay all of his back tithing.

"I thought this was remarkable for a man to gain such faith in such a short period of time," he said.

"On the way from the States to Pearl Harbor, I had a wisdom tooth problem and went to a dentist on the ship, who pulled the tooth. In the process we got acquainted. He was Jewish and I was Mormon. I reminded him that I was also of Israel. He couldn't understand how I could be of Israel. I told him I was of Joseph through his son Ephraim. We talked about Israel and the tribes of Israel. He wasn't very knowledgeable about it, but we became great friends. I held group meetings in the carpenter shop on the ship, and when my Jewish friend found that we were holding meetings in the carpenter shop, he made arrangements for us to come up to the officers' dining area. He even provided accommodations for us to hold the sacrament with their glasses and plates and such. This friendship continued, and he told me of a Jewish chaplain that made the rounds of the ships in the harbor. He made an appointment, when he came to the ship that we were on, that he and I and another Jewish friend would meet with the Jewish chaplain. He said, 'He can answer all your questions about the children of Israel and Jewish beliefs.'

Reflecting on missionary work as a young missionary in the field and in the service, he said the knowledge that he had the gift of the Holy Ghost with him was never far from his thoughts.

"I remember as a very young missionary attending the first cottage meeting in my field of labor. My companion was there and the district president, Sanfred Elieson, was there. My companion asked the district president, 'Should we call on William O. Copeland to speak at his first meeting?' And the district president thought they should. I remember as I stood I enjoyed a great spirit, and when my talk was over they told me I had spoken for 20 minutes. That night as we returned

to our home and to our bed, I lay there remembering the experiences of the meeting, and in my mind's eye I could go back to my days as a child. I could see the very classroom where I sat, the chair that I sat in, and I could see in vision the teacher that taught me those principles that I spoke of in that first talk that I gave as a missionary. This was a great inspiration to me and a great witness of the Spirit, that I was not alone as a young missionary, but that I could enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost as needed.

"During my time in service I was group leader, and I remember the meetings immediately before we went into the invasion of Iwo Jima. We had got reports and knew that it would be a tough invasion. I think it significant that the size of our LDS group of servicemen remained the same. We didn't pick up any more because of an imminent invasion. And at the same time I remember just before going into the invasion that the chaplain aboard had his office filled with servicemen and the hallways were lined up with men waiting to get in to see the chaplain. There was such a difference in our group compared to his group. He didn't hardly have enough to hold meetings on Sundays before the invasion, but just prior to the invasion he had so many that he couldn't serve them all."

In 1945 when he completed his tour of duty, he returned to Jacksonville. He thinks his first calling was as a counselor in the branch Sunday School, then as a teacher for the M-men class on Mutual nights.

"When they were organizing the new stake I remember being called to the Park and Copeland Street Chapel where Charles A. Callis and President Harold B. Lee were holding interviews. I knew I was to be interviewed for an office in the new stake that was being organized. I knew I didn't want to serve in the MIA, because I felt that I had just been served out and didn't have anything new to contribute. So I made up my mind, 'If it's MIA, I won't take it. I don't care if he is an apostle.'

"As I got to the chapel I had to sit in the hall and wait for my turn, and as I sat there I repented of that. I left the hall and went down into the chapel, in one of the back classrooms, and got on my knees and repented to the Lord. I promised I would serve wherever I was called. I was called as bishop, and I felt I was relieved being called to be bishop instead of an MIA worker. But I'm glad that I repented of that thing and recognized the priesthood for what they are.

"I remember being excited for we had looked forward to being a stake for so many years. There was a great excitement in the whole area that we were finally to have a stake. Wesconett was possibly the smallest ward in the stake. At one time we were less than one hundred in membership, but servicemen started coming in and

the ward prospered and grew in numbers. It actually became one of the strong wards in the Jacksonville area. When it became the Fourth Ward it actually became the nucleus of a fair part of the Jacksonville West Stake.

"It was really a challenge because we had to learn what stakes and wards were. All we knew about stakes and wards was how to spell them. President Alvin C. Chace, the original stake president had to learn about stake functions. As bishops we had to learn everything about ward functions. It was all new to us. Serving the people, though, serving the members, was something that we knew about, because that was what we had been active in over the years. Even though we were called by a new name and the meetings were called by different names, the work of serving the membership of the Church was still the same.

"I've never felt adequate in any call that has come to me, but we knew our stake presidency and had full confidence in them. Even though it was new in organization, we never felt at a loss for leadership, because of the quality of men we had in the stake presidency and high council. So as a bishop I never felt inadequate because of lack of leadership and being so far from the headquarters of the Church. These men were devoted, dedicated, and very spiritual men, men that you could feel comfortable in following their leadership. I never felt a need for leadership beyond what we had in these men. The high councilors, even though new in name, were men of experience, were men of judgment, and they were men of dedication. So we were blessed with a special quality of leadership in those that we served under.

"I served as bishop about three years, then was placed on the high council of the Florida Stake.

"At that time ward teaching was one of the main programs then, and one of the high councilors was assigned as chairman of the stake ward teaching committee. That was one of my assignments. I had the Melchizedek Priesthood Committee and was assigned as supervisor of an elders quorum. I also was chairman of the stake ward teaching committee, and advisor to the YW and YMMIA program in the stake, plus adviser to a ward.

"As a high councilor I felt especially blessed to serve with President Chace. He was a great spiritual leader. He inspired and he enthused. But I remember I had quite a family by this time, my wife, three sons and seven daughters and only had one automobile. I had to leave my wife and children home without transportation to Sunday School. Sometimes she would call and get transportation, and sometimes I found later that she would hold Sunday School at home with the children by herself.

"One time I had been out on an all-day Sunday

assignment. I had gone to Oak Grove in the forepart of the day, and I ended up in Lake City the latter part of the day and the night for the night meeting. On my way home, better than an hour by myself in the car, I was reviewing the experiences of the day. Then the thought came to me. 'I wonder if all of this is necessary, and I even wonder if I'm effective, and I wonder if I'm doing right by leaving my wife and children by themselves to shift for themselves?'

"As I dwelt on the thought, I could hear the sound of music. I couldn't tell if it was a great organ or a large choir, but the sound filled the automobile that I was driving and it shook my very being. I remember it reached a great crescendo and then gradually faded away. I remember distinctly as it left me, there came a peace that filled my soul. I've never doubted since, and I've never hesitated to accept whatever call came, and this same assurance has stayed with me to this day."

He served as a high councilor for nearly 12 years.

When the Florida Stake President, who at that time was Henry V. Jenkins, was called on a mission to England, he was released from the high council and called to be president of the Florida Stake. During his term the name of the stake was changed to more properly represent the area and re-named the Jacksonville West Stake. "The Jacksonville East Stake had already been organized at the time," he explained.

What were his greatest challenges as a counselor in the presidency and as the stake president?

"One of the greatest challenges in administration was distance. For a time, before the stake was originally divided and the East Stake was formed, we had two Georgia wards to serve and eleven other wards and branches in Florida. We went from Axson, Georgia, to the north to Palatka, Oak Grove, and Lake City to the south and west. So distance was a great challenge and the number of units that we served was a great challenge.

Expansion in the Church was rapid.

"We felt that much growth and development was gained when we divided. It really challenged the people to reach out and get additional leadership as the ward or unit was divided."

Growth also presented challenges. There was tremendous expense on the members and to the stake of building new buildings.

"I'm sure it was because of the great faith and dedication of the people. It was a great expense to the ward leadership to attend the leadership meetings and the conferences and even the general leadership meetings where we had representatives come from general boards from Salt Lake. So there was immense expense even in transportation at the time. But as we built buildings, ward centers and even stake centers, there was just such a ded-



ication among the members. There wasn't a great deal of complaint when it came to building chapels and meeting requirements of attendance to leadership meetings. The brethren used great imagination in order to meet these financial demands on the people. President Jenkins during his time, and even while I was with him, paid off the remainder of that building and the stake welfare farm. They had stake dinners on a stakewide basis and charged what was then an enormous price for the dinners. Later to make it a little easier on the people, President Jenkins had the people hold these dinners in their own area instead of traveling to the stake center. This was still a heavy financial burden on the people, but they responded and these expenses were met and paid off. "

He said he had never had the desire to move West even though his wife was from Salt Lake City, and he had hoped she would be able to return and live closer to her own people.

"I've always felt my church call was in the South. I never feared for safety or raising my children in the South. I felt the advantages of living in a mission atmosphere were even greater than living near what you might call the headquarters of the Church. As far as calamities, I knew they were suppose to come, but I never feared them. I felt that we were Zion and I felt the Lord's protection would be in the South the same as it would be anyplace else where the Church was strong. I felt the Church would be strong here, and it has lived up to and exceeded every expectation that I ever had about the strength and growth of the Church in the South."

Many returned missionaries desired to attend Brigham Young University and he said many married and remained there.

"I think we lost a lot of great potential leadership and possibly lost some potential growth because of this loss to the West of our young men that attended the University. The Church education program has seen these challenges and they've met them with seminary and institute programs. The need for the leadership of these young men is not so great as it was, but when I was in leadership, I could see that these young men would have been such a power and such an advantage in leadership positions because of their experience and because of the education that they had gained at the "Y".

He served six and one-half years as stake president.

"That was a great experience in my life. During this time the Jacksonville West Stake played a great part in the building of the Washington Temple. During that time the stake was divided again and the Gainesville stake organized. We also built and moved into the lovely stake center in the Orange Park area. I feel that our leadership program compared well with leadership that I had seen in special leadership training sessions in Salt Lake,

and even back to the days that we had June conference for the young people's leadership training. I feel good about the quality of those that surrounded me in the stake organization, counselors and high council and quorum presidents. We sought the best and we did everything we could to train them in their callings."

Participating in the building of the Washington, D.C. Temple was a great experience and has held fond memories through the years.

"I inherited the assignment from President Jenkins when I was called to serve as stake president when he was released. It was a great spiritual experience. It was the easiest money that we ever raised in the stake. I had the responsibility to supervise the gathering of funds from stakes in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Florida.

"As the completion of the temple drew closer, I had the blessing of being the priesthood leader assigned to supervise the organization and participate in preparing an eighty-voice choir from five stakes. Our choir sang for the actual dedicatory service, because it was the first hour of the dedicatory services. There were 16 voices from each of the five stakes. When the actual time came and they were performing, the choir was so spiritually overcome that they couldn't sing. I could hear the great room filled with angel voices. It was one of the great spiritual experiences of my life. I never attend the Washington Temple except my eyes fill as I come on the grounds of this great temple.

"At that time we enjoyed great success in reactivation of the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood. We pointed them to the temple and to have them make their way to the temple to have their wives and families sealed to them. We encouraged everyone to carry a temple recommend. A number of families went. A number of families had great experiences of trial and tribulation in making preparation to go, but many went .

"As I prepared for my retirement, I made a decision to move to Lawty where I had property which was just over the boundary line of the two stakes, Gainesville and Jacksonville West. When the stake president in Gainesville found I was moving over in his stake he got in touch with President Ezra Taft Benson who was coming to their conference in November of 1976. He requested that I come over for an interview. He inquired if I was building and I assured him that I was. Since I was moving into the Gainesville Stake, he called me and had me sustained as a patriarch in the Gainesville Florida Stake. I continued to serve as the Jacksonville West Stake president until December when we had a scheduled conference. President LeGrand Richards came to the conference and released me and reorganized the stake. After the conference President Richards ordained

and set me apart as patriarch in the Gainesville Stake.

"My experiences as a patriarch are without number and they look like they're without limit. I've enjoyed this office like none I've ever known before, and I'm sure like nothing else that can come to me in my life in priesthood service."

With the rapid growth of the Church, the greatest challenge facing the Church today he has an opinion and some vivid reflections.

"I believe we are on solid ground. Even though the increase in membership is great, I believe the quality of leadership will be such that they will meet the challenge of the new members.

"My first recollection of church attendance, church experience, and of church activity was in the single little chapel in the Jacksonville area. It was a very small wooden chapel. I remember going to Sunday School there when possibly the whole Sunday School was less than fifty people. I remember going into class, and it was one of only three or four classes in the whole Sunday School. There would be less than a dozen of us children in the whole class.

"I've seen things go from this to the time that we moved into the large, lovely, brick chapel on Park and Copeland Streets. I think it might be noteworthy to say that the word was passed that since we were moving into the new chapel, they didn't want people driving up there with horses and wagons. They didn't think it was in keeping with the new chapel.

"My days go back to President Charles A. Callis. I remember the forceful man he was. Even though I was a child, not yet a teenager, I knew he was a man of great spiritual stature and one that loved the area. I'm sure he sits in the councils in Heaven and still oversees the welfare of this area. It's been a blessing to me all of my days to see the Church grow and strengthen and prosper. It's been my blessing to be associated with great men, and these have been the ones that I have tried to pattern my life after. I'm grateful for all of these experiences and for my testimony of the Lord, our Savior and Redeemer.

"Remembering and reviewing Church growth and personal Church experiences has brought back a world of happy memories. Seeing my own children and grandchildren fill missions and assume leadership positions; seeing children and grandchildren of other early church leaders of this era doing the same, fills my heart with much appreciation for those who have gone before me and given so much! God Bless them, everyone."

William O. Copeland

*I know that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God spoken of by Daniel (2:44). I see proof of it in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. I have done as we are told in John (7:17) and as we are promised we shall know. So I know it is true.*

*Miss Sarah Ann Gwynn*  
testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, July 4, 1908

*I have a testimony to bear to the truth of the gospel. There is not a doubt in my mind. I knew that it was true the first Elders I heard preach, and I feel that I have been greatly blessed by embracing it; and I know that if I will heed its teachings I will be saved. I also know that Joseph Smith was a prophet, for no man could do the work he did except God were with him.*

*M.H. Nettles*  
testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, July 4, 1908

*I have a testimony to bear to the truth of the gospel. I know that it is true and I am not ashamed to bear testimony to the world. I have been greatly blessed since I embraced it, and I know that if I will live up to its teachings I will be saved. I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God.*

*Matilda Nettles*  
testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, July 4, 1908

*I know that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true Church of Christ, and that this is the gospel which John saw the angel flying in the midst of heaven, to preach to them that dwell on the earth, (Rev. 14:6); and that the Bible is true, the Book of Mormon is also true.*

*Samuel P. Gwynn*  
testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, July 4, 1908

*I know if the Bible be true that Joseph Smith is a true prophet, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true Church. I know the 'Mormon' Elders are preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, which shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. (Matt 24:14)*

*Louisa M. Gwynn*  
testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, July 4, 1908



## DAISY FRASER DOBSON

Sanderson, Baker County, Florida

(This is a copy of the exact hand written story by Daisy Fraser Dobson at the age of 78 years, four years before her death in 1964)

"I was born 12 March 1882, at Sanderson, Baker Co., Fla. to Brantly Harrison Fraser and Maranda Bowyer. I was born to honorable, but poor parents. I didn't get much schooling as in those days we only had three and four month terms of school during the year, and I didn't even get to go to all that short term as my father didn't care for educating girls as there wasn't jobs for girls to work at. I was brought up in the Methodist Church though I never united with any church until I was 31 years old and was the mother of five children. However, in my 15th year two Mormon Elders came into my home county, but they were looked upon as very bad. As my father was a man that was friendly to everybody, when the Elders came into our community my dad went to hear them preach and invited them over to visit with him. He told them in a friendly way that he thought he could convince them that they were wrong in their teaching, but, of course, he soon found that he couldn't argue at them. As I was only in my 15th year, it appealed to me from the time that I began to hear them talk, and it was only a few months until I had a great desire to join the Mormon Church. As my parents did not join, and I had no encouragement to join, time passed on like that for a good many years, but always when I heard an Elder preach, it just thrilled me very much. As time passed on, the Elders quit visiting in our home, and I finally married a man that didn't know anything about the Church, yet, I always had a love for the Mormon Church. As time passed on I didn't even meet up with any Elders, but from some cause I happened to pick up a Book of Mormon and began to read it again. I also had a Voice of Warning and began to read those two books. I became as interested as I had been a few years back, but of course, I had always had that love for the Church during all those years since I heard the Elders preach. I got to the place that I had that desire to be baptized as much as I ever had. I promised myself that if I come in contact with the Elders again I sure would be baptized. So the time I heard of the Elders again was in 1913 which was the funeral of Miss Emmie Wester of Sanderson. Having no one to encourage me, I let it pass by again. So I worried on and it really worried me very much so I asked the Lord to give me an opportunity that I could be baptized. That was one p.m. that I especially asked the Lord for this blessing. So the next

p.m. I saw two men coming down the road and when they got to the end of our lane that came up to our house, one of them stopped and the other one came on up to our house. He stopped at the gate and asked me if I would like to buy a Book of Mormon. I told him no, that I had a Book of Mormon, but I would like to buy a Doctrine and Covenants if he had one of them. He said, 'Yes Ma'am, you can get all of them that you like'. So when I saw that I could get the book, I told him why I asked for it, that I had been told that you couldn't buy these books if you was not a member of the Church. That had proved to be another false, but I told him I wanted to be baptized and was baptized on May the 18th, 1913. My father was baptized also and a boy by the name of Dick Green, son of Wesley and Eliza Green. Time passed on and we moved to Sanderson and there was a branch of the Church there. So I had all of my children baptized into the Church. As time passed on, my children grew up and on May 22, 1926, my oldest son was killed accidentally in Sanderson at the age of 22. That was the hardest thing that has ever happened in all my life but my consolation is that I know I will have my boy again as I went to the Temple in Salt Lake City the 3rd of April 1959, and had my dear boy sealed to me and my husband, and I pray that we will live worthy and I will have my loved one when we go on to our eternal reward. I lost another little darling boy on 11 Feb 1918, and he was also sealed to us. I prayed to the Lord many times to bless me that I would be able to live and go to the Temple and do the Temple work, and He surely answered my prayers, and I felt good all the way through. Amen.

Daisy Fraser Dobson  
5 March 1960

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*I am proud to bear my testimony to the truth of the gospel. In a sincere prayer to God, I received a knowledge of the divine mission of Joseph Smith, and that the Book of Mormon was the word of God. I asked God to send the Elders to me, and they came in about twelve hours, the only two I had ever seen. I was baptized. They taught me the Word of Wisdom, and I quit tobacco, coffee and whiskey, and for that, God gave me my health. I also pay tithing and find God's word true.*

*B.F. Sutton*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, July 4, 1908*

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# POLLY ANN AND ARTHUR NELSON DOUBERLY

Columbia County, Florida

Polly Ann and Arthur Nelson Douberley were baptized in Columbia County, Florida, by Elder A.G. Sedgewick. Their oldest daughter, Stella was baptized and confirmed June 20, 1897, by Elder Elias A. Gee. Nelson's brother Edward Nathanael and wife, Mary Jane Douberley were baptized August 9, 1897, by Elder R.B. Cutler and confirmed by Elder I.F. Holtsclaw.

In the years that followed, Polly and Nelson had 11 other children baptized, all of who married and saw their children baptized into the Church.

At some point a Sunday School was organized in the Douberley community. Sunday School was held in the Ebenezer School house which was on Douberley land. It was called the Cumorah Sunday School.

Polly has been referred to as the Sunday School Superintendent. She took the lead in most things as Nelson, as well as an older brother Edward, were born deaf. However Nelson held the priesthood and passed the sacrament. Their sons and daughters also took an active part in the Church. Polly was well-versed in the scriptures and did not hesitate to stand up to the Protestant ministers when they misquoted or misinterpreted a scripture. Whenever the missionaries returned to the community they stayed in Polly and Nelson's home.

The Douberley descendants have served, and are now serving, in many leadership positions throughout the Church in Florida.

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*I believe Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, I know I have been blessed with better health since I joined the Church some years ago. I was about to lose my right hand by having it amputated when the Elders came and administered to me. In a few days my hand was well. My son had suffered along with pain in his head, and the doctors said he would die; but he was healed by the Elders.*

*Mrs. C.C. Blackwelder*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, July 18, 1908*

*I have been a member of this true Church three years, and I know it is true because I have been healed by the power of God through the Elders. I know Joseph Smith was a true prophet, or the gospel would not have spread over the earth as it has.*

*Mrs. Ethel Weeks*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, July 18, 1908*

*I am a Latter-day Saint because of the simplicity of their teachings, which are in accord with the doctrine of our Savior. Also the Spirit of the Lord bears witness to my soul that this is the work of God, and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of the Highest.*

*Mary Jane Padgett*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, July 18, 1908*

*I gladly bear my testimony to all people that I know that the gospel taught by the Latter-day Saints is true, Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God and that the Book of Mormon is a divine record. This testimony is within the reach of every one, so that there need be no doubt.*

*Lou L Walker*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, July 18, 1908*

*My testimony is not to think nor guess whether the gospel is true, but to know. I was a slave to tobacco. I had been an investigator about two years. I had two teeth that would commence to ache every morning at about 4 o'clock, and the only thing that would stop them was to put tobacco on them; so I said: "Lord, if the Church is right, you can take charge of the teeth." So I quit the tobacco and the teeth did not even get sore. This is my testimony.*

*J.R. Daniel.*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, Aug. 22, 1908*

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*Thaddeus and Margaret Greene Hill  
in Salt Lake City, 1917*

# THADDEUS AND MARGARET HILL

*The following family sketches have been submitted by Lawrence Maddock, author of The Door of Memory, the story of his LDS pioneer ancestors. I am grateful to Brother Maddock for the many contributions he has provided in this portion as well as various other segments of this publication. For related narratives see the Maddock and Canova sections.*

Thaddeus and Margaret Hill were among the earliest converts to Mormonism in northern Florida and among the first Latter-day Saints in Jacksonville.

Thaddeus was born in 1856, the eldest son of a well-to-do, well-educated family of the Old South. His father was a physician, one of the early M.D.'s to practice in Florida. His mother had been educated in a private girls' school. At the age of sixteen, Thaddeus enlisted in the Confederate Army. The Hill family's way of life ended abruptly with the South's defeat in the Civil War and with Dr. Hill's early death.

In 1872 Thaddeus Hill married Margaret Greene, the sixteen-year-old daughter of Elisha Greene, a Southern pioneer and one of the original settlers of Baker County. In the decades following the Civil War, the Greene and Hill families shared the poverty that affected many in the South. They were, however, highly respectable people. Religion always played a vital role in their lives.

Margaret Greene Hill, like almost everyone else in the community, was a Baptist. Thaddeus Hill (whose mother was, for a time at least, a convert to Catholicism) accepted no religious creed and sometimes said that he was waiting for a church with prophets and apostles. Suddenly, one day in 1897, he found such a church. It was for him and for his family a momentous day.

Mormon missionaries first visited the Hills during the Christmas season of 1896, when they were living in the old log house Elisha Greene had built around 1830. Elder Kriddle, a tall, auburn-haired man with a heavy mustache, and Elder Watts, an older man with greying hair and moustache, appeared on the country road in a drizzling rain. They wore derby hats and swallow-tailed coats, the distinguishing uniform of Mormon Elders. Like many travellers before them, the men from Utah found shelter and hospitality in the old Greene homestead. Except to mention the Word of Wisdom in refusing coffee, the Elders said little about their religion, but when they left the following morning, their songs and stories (the age of simplicity having not yet perished) had



**Thaddeus  
Alphonso  
Hill**

made good friends of the Hill children, particularly Janie and Edna.

Six months later, two other wayworn Mormons appeared on the dusty lane leading to Elisha's old log house. Isaac Hollsclaw, an elderly man with dark hair and moustache, and his younger companion, Lafayette Dana, a tall, clean-shaven man, had been walking through the woods for several days. Disturbing stories circulated about Mormons, and country people who would willingly give food and shelter to most strangers closed their homes to polygamists. Nevertheless, when Elder Hollsclaw saw the Greene house, he turned to his companions and said, "The blood of Israel is in this house. We'll get entrance." They would, in fact, be received as messengers of God. At that moment, however, Margaret was feeling none of the promptings of the blood of Israel.

Recognizing the derbies and swallow-tailed coats of Mormons, she bolted the door and told the children to stay out of sight. If their papa met the missionaries, she said, he would take them in. Needless to say, Janie and Edna were obedient children – their parents were disciplinarians – but they associated Elders with stories. They peeked from behind the house to smile at the two dusty Mormons. Given an opportunity to ask for water, the missionaries were able to meet Thad Hill and when they asked for permission to 'sit and cool' he invited them to remain overnight. While eating watermelon with Thad in the warm afternoon, the Elders spoke of their religious doctrines. Before supper Thaddeus surprised Margaret by announcing that he had found the true gospel. In the evening, the Elders continued their explanations in a cottage meeting for the Hills and their neighbors. The Manns and the Terrells were among those present.

Thad detained his guests for a week to question them, then invited them to return for a second visit which stretched into several weeks. During this time he



assisted the Elders in their work by driving them around the countryside in his two-wheeled horse cart.

Thaddeus, Margaret, and their three oldest children, Ella, Ida, and Alice, were baptized on July 25, 1897, by Elders Hollsclaw and Dancer. Thaddeus and Margaret led the way into the Little St. Mary's River. The five members of the family were baptized in order of age with Thaddeus, the oldest, first. After being ordained on the banks of the river, they returned to their home for a sacrament meeting.



**1915** – Left to right: Elder Edward W. Bluemel, Ella Hill Roberts (1st person known to be baptised in LDS Church in Jacksonville, wife of Jacksonville Police Chief Lonnie Roberts), President M.S. Winder, and the little girl on the porch is Aline Roberts.

Six weeks later, the missionaries baptized a second group of converts including George and Dianna Canova, their daughters, Adaline and Kitty, Henry Wester, his daughter Effie, and Dan Mann.

A Latter-day Saint Sunday School was soon organized among the converts and held in the Masonic Lodge at Sanderson. Dan Mann was appointed the presiding elder. Thaddeus Hill and George Canova were ordained priests.

Widespread interest in the Church soon led to a conference at which Elder Kimble, president of the Southern States Mission, and Elder Cowley of the Council of the Twelve were present. Many members and investigators travelled over the dirt roads for days in order to attend. Most arrived in horse carts, a very few in buggies. They lunched on the grounds of the Lodge under an arbor covered with pine saplings. The arbor had been specially constructed for this important occasion. That night thirteen Elders stayed with the Hill family. Two hams were served for breakfast the following morning.

The Church had surprising success in its missionary efforts in Baker County, but it also encountered bitter

opposition. During one baptismal service, John Durance fired on an Elder preaching to the congregation. The missionary, never visibly disconcerted, continued speaking. Ander Greene later chastised Durance for disturbing the service. Although an unredeemed man of violence, Ander stood staunchly for the respect of women and religion.

Around this time (1898) a self-styled 'Committee of Eight' sent a threatening letter to the missionaries in Sanderson. The letter also mentioned 'a certain man'

who was feeding them. George Canova, who had opened his home to the Elders, was apparently that man. One night as he and Thaddeus Hill were returning to Sanderson from a Latter-day Saint conference, Thaddeus stepped down from their buggy to open a pasture gate. Suddenly shots rang out and George Canova lay mortally wounded. Thaddeus, seeing that he could no longer help his friend, dashed through the bushes to a nearby creek. The band of murderers followed him and shot at him, but he managed to escape through the swamp. After wandering for several miles, he came to an isolated farm where he found help. Mr. Kersey, a farmer who was friendly to the Elders, gave him a horse to ride and walked beside him

back to Sanderson.

Following this incident, Thaddeus and Margaret began to consider leaving Baker County. Although Margaret was reluctant to leave her home, she agreed in 1902 or 1903 to live in Jacksonville, where the older children of the family, Ella, Ida, George, and Foster, had already made their homes. The Hills returned to the sanctuary of the country after Frank and Nellie had typhoid fever, but in 1905 they moved permanently to the city.

The Hill family played an important part in the early Church in Jacksonville. Ella Hill Roberts was the first member in the city. She regularly entertained the missionaries, including Ben E. Rich, President of the Southern States Mission. When Georgia Cordel was appointed first president of the Relief Society, she asked Ella Roberts to serve as her first counsellor, Margaret Hill, as her second counsellor. Janie, Edna, and Nellie Hill served in various offices. During the 1920's, Edna Hill Grindstaff served for five years as president of the Relief Society. Mabel Roberts, a Hill grandchild, served as organist from the time she was a child. Pearl Griner

Hill (Mrs. Foster Hill), a well-trained musician, as well as other members of the family worked in the Church.

In 1910, Margaret Hill and her five younger children visited Salt Lake City for the first time. In 1913 and again around 1917, the Hill family moved to Salt Lake City. After brief residences, however, they returned to Jacksonville. In 1918, Thaddeus and Margaret Hill were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple.

Thaddeus Hill died in 1928, Margaret Hill, in 1940. Their descendants have continued to be active in the Church and, by 1992, fifty-seven of them had served as missionaries.



**Relief Society Presidency, Jacksonville Branch, Jacksonville, Florida, 1910**  
Florence Terrell Harvin, President, center. Margaret Greene Hill, 1st Counselor, left. Ella Gertrude Hill Roberts, 2nd Counselor, right.

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*In an interesting letter, Dr. G.W. Dent of Florida, a veteran of the Civil War, relates a very interesting religious experience, and bears a faithful testimony to the truth of the gospel as taught by the Latter-day Saints.*

*I gave my testimony to the truth of the gospel nine years ago in the Southern Star. But as my faith in this great latter-day work is so much stronger now that it was then, I feel to give it again. I know that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only authorized Church upon the earth; and I also know that the Book of Mormon is of divine origin, and that Joseph Smith was one of the greatest prophets that ever lived, for I have had an inspiration of the truth of these things, and I know whereof I speak.*

*Mrs. Julia Jordan*

*testimony from Liabona, The Elders' Journal, Aug. 22, 1908*

*Sister Ida Rushing of Florida, who was baptized in Meridian, Miss., in a letter which breathes a pleasing spirit, tells of her conversion, expresses gratitude to the Elders who taught her and the family the gospel, and bears a faithful testimony to it.*

*testimony from Liabona, The Elders' Journal, Aug. 22, 1908*

*I joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints seven years ago, and feel assured I joined the true one. I believe Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. I have been happier since I joined this Church than I ever was before, and I grow stronger in faith all the time. I know the Elders have great healing power from God, for I have been relieved of great pain by prayer.*

*Mrs. Kizzie Keen*

*testimony from Liabona, The Elders' Journal, Aug. 22, 1908*

*I feel that I must bear my testimony to the truth of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as taught by the Latter-day Saints. I know without doubt that it is true. I only wish others could see as I do. I have had testimony after testimony. I know Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God and that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, the same as I believe the Bible to be.*

*Mrs. Mamie Masce*

*testimony from Liabona, The Elders' Journal, Aug. 22, 1908*

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*Jesse Oliver Johns Family*

Left to right: Pauline, Jesse O. Johns, Adaline (baby), Sallie Nettles Johns  
with Matilda.

In rear: Ray and Talmadge.

# SALLY NETTLES JOHNS

Olustee, Baker County, Florida

Many of the South's early Trailblazers died long before they, or anyone else thought of recording their memories or recollections. Sally Nettles Johns is one such person.

More than two decades since her death in March 1975, her descendants never miss an opportunity to stand in testimony meetings and faithfully express sincere gratitude for this dedicated and devoted Saint who has remained a constant inspiration and example in their lives.

Sally was born July 4, 1891, in Columbia County, Florida, the first of eleven children to Martin Henry and Matilda Keene Nettles. She married Jessie Oliver Johns on December 29, 1910, and became the mother of 12 children.

A daughter and granddaughter fondly recall some of the simple things that endeared her to them.

"My memories of Mama are precious ones. From the time I can first remember she was there to warm my feet, tuck me in, sing a hymn. She knew the words to all the old favorite hymns. One of her favorite was, "Nay Speak No Ill". She was a peacemaker. She did not like contention and always found a way around that. She taught her children to love one another.

"I was always afraid of bad weather. I thought as a child if it rained, it was 'bad' weather. So if the thunder and lightning came, I was scared to death and the only place I felt safe was with my Mama and her apron over my head.

"Mama was happy hoeing in the garden or in her flowers. She loved to tend to the chickens, milk the cows, and do outside things.

"Mama told us her Mama taught her to sew when she was nine years old. She made all of her brothers and sisters dresses, shirts and overalls. She made our clothes too, until we were big enough to pick beans or work in tobacco and make money to buy our own. Mama taught us to do the things she knew how to do. I always wanted my children to learn to do things like we learned from my Mama. Every year we would have 'hog killings' and cane grindings. That was like a holiday or a special day for us, all working together, everyone knowing what their special job was. We little ones would just stay near Mama to run get this or run get that.

"One of the things I remember so well about Mama is that during World War II three of my brothers were serving overseas, two in Europe and one in Asia. We had family prayer every night after we had read from the scriptures. Mama's prayers were answered when all three

of her sons returned home. Two had been wounded, but due to the Priesthood power (one was administered to in England), they came home.

"Mama always gave thanks for her many blessings. She had the faith, she never doubted. She loved the Church and would walk, catch a ride with another member, or ride on the back of a truck to take us children to Church. She was not content to miss a meeting. When Conference was held in Jacksonville, we would make arrangements with members, or we'd catch the bus, but we were there. It was the greatest joy when my husband and I took Mama to Logan Utah Temple to be sealed to Daddy and my little sister and brother who were deceased, and sealed to me. She was in her 70's then, and lived to be 84. She never wavered in her testimony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. She was an inspiration to all of us. She was a missionary and not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. She would give out pamphlets to the Insurance man, she subscribed to the Church Magazine for her eye doctor in Jacksonville, and she loved the Elders, her home teachers and visiting teachers.

"She was a very devoted daughter. She loved her Ma and Pa. She said Pa was the one who went to hear the traveling missionaries and came home and told Ma and the children. He knew they were true followers of Christ. They were baptized soon after. The year was 1907.

Mama had 12 children and eleven of them have been sealed to her and Daddy in the House of the Lord for eternity. What a wonderful 'Elect Lady' she was. I will always cherish these fond memories and give thanks to my Heavenly Father for such a wonderful mother.

Her daughter, Mary Allison Johns Branson,  
Lake City, Florida

## GRANNIE

"I remember the days when my mom, my brother and I would walk down the road to see Grannie pushing my little sister in the stroller. She was always busy and would be out in the vegetable or flower garden, milking the cow, or just reading her Bible, but when we got there she always stopped what she would be doing and talk to us. She loved to tell stories and I wished so often that as I got older I had written them down. Sometimes they were funny and sometimes just meaningful, but they always had something to do with the gospel and the commandments.

"She was a small woman in stature, with beautiful white hair that she always wore short. She was pleasingly plump and always wore an apron.

"I remember one time we were out in the garden



working and a quail with a lot of little ones ran right by her. She leaned down and caught all the babies in her apron. She let us all look at them and touch them, then she gently put her apron down and let them run to their mommy. She was always like that, so gentle, taking pleasure from the world around her.

"One time as I walked down to see Grannie, I saw a brown fuzzy grass growing in the ditch. I picked some of it and took it to her. She thought it was beautiful and put it in a jar. She kept it for a long time. I could go into her room and there it would be sitting by her bed.

"We attended Church in Sanderson, and Grannie went with us most of the time. She always bore her testimony. She loved the gospel and Jesus Christ.

"I spent the night with Grannie a lot. When it was bedtime I would hear Grannie saying her prayers. She would say The Lord's Prayer first and then her own prayer would follow.

"My grandfather joined the Church in 1936 along with several of his children. One of their 12 children was my dad, Harry Heber Johns, named after Heber J. Grant. My mom, Cleo Patricia (Pat) Jolly loved my Grannie as if she were her mother. I can remember going to family reunions, church socials, birthday celebrations and gathering with my mom and grannie. They were like 'Ruth and Naomi' in the Bible. Any place or any thing my grannie wanted to go or do, my mom was right there making sure that she did it.

"Grannie loved to work with her hands. When I graduated from high school she made me a quilt. I still have that quilt and many others that she made on an old quilting frame.

"On her 78th birthday I gave her a silver trinket box. She told me that it was the prettiest thing she had ever seen, and that when she died she wanted me to have it



***Sallie Nettles Johns in August 1974  
Olustee, Florida***

back to remember her. I didn't need that trinket box to remember her, she lives in my heart and mind every day, with my mom. The things these two women have taught me, has helped me in my life to try and live closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. I hope there is a little of her gentleness, kindness, and lovingness in me.

Her granddaughter, Patty Johns Duncan,  
Olustee, Florida



***Harry Heber and Cleo Patricia 'Pat' Johns  
Olustee, Florida***

# MILTON/WALDRON/JOHNSON PIONEERS

## and RELATED FAMILIES

By STANLEY CLYDE JOHNSON  
Newberry, Florida

*The information for these pioneer families has been shared by a descendant, Stanley Clyde Johnson of Newberry, Florida, and regretfully edited for brevity. President Johnson's service to the Church in the South would be hard to equal, and impossible to fittingly chronicle. For all of his contributions, service and experiences, it would require volumes. It is regretted that everything about his service could not be included here and in other sections. His efforts to research and maintain a detailed history of the LDS Church in the South is unexcelled. I do not know of a more efficient, dedicated, and devoted Latter-day Saint than Brother Johnson. I am indebted and filled with gratitude for his constant assistance throughout the many years we have been acquainted and shared an interest in the Church's history and growth in the South. lms*

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*I ask myself whether it was wrong to be made bishop when I was twenty-one, whether it was wrong to accept being made the stake president when I was thirty-four. Did I neglect my family, as some would say, to become a 'Churchaholic'? Did I do any of these things. I don't believe so. Would I do the same things over again if I were to be asked to? If I had to live my life over again, I'm afraid I'd say yes.*

*Stanley Clyde Johnson*

*"I've always felt close to my work in the Church in the South, and I feel that the Master has allowed us, my wife and me, and our family to leave a pretty fair footprint almost all over the whole state of Florida. We've seen many stakes organized and when I was a boy there were none.*

*Stanley Clyde Johnson*

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In 1895 the first travelling missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints met with great success working in Suwannee County near Live Oak. With hope and faith as their companions, they left the little community known as Voyles and moved on into neighboring Hamilton County. Myriem Waldron Milton, a farm wife, was working in the house the day they stopped by, while her husband, Charles Foster Milton, was in the field plowing. The missionaries

told Myriem Milton they were holding a meeting that evening in a little one-room school house in the community and would like to invite them to attend. When Charles came in for lunch, Myriem told him about the two travelling missionaries. Much to Myriem's surprise Charles left the field that day and returned to his home where he changed clothes and went with his wife to the meeting. The couple was immediately impressed that the message of the missionaries was true. Charles was a member of the Advent Christian Church at the time, so he arranged a meeting between his brother-in-law, who was his minister, and the missionaries. He asked for a debate concerning the two religions. He wanted to prove the young missionaries wrong, but they confounded his minister with their knowledge. The frustrated minister lost his control and Charles made the decision to be baptized as a Latter-day Saint a few days later. Unlike other farmers in the area, Charles refused to grow tobacco. After praying about it, he said he felt he should not because he was a Latter-day Saint. Instead he grew vegetables such as peas and corn. He grew sugar cane to make syrup. When his wife Myriem Waldron died after bearing him four daughters and seven sons, he married Ida Green and the couple had two sons, James and Clifton Foster. Charles was a great fiddler and was called upon regularly to play in the community. He won many fiddling contests playing such tunes as Mississippi Sawyer, Arkansas Traveler, and Will There Be Any Stars In My Crown.. He served on the school board in Hamilton County and was well-respected in the community for having the courage to stand up for what was right. Charles toiled to support his large family on the farm, but when his health began to fail in the late 1940's, he sold the farm he had paid \$600 for and moved to Jacksonville. Although he made a handsome profit off his \$2,500 selling price, when phosphate was discovered on his farm a few years later, its value soared to \$250,000.

Charles remained true and faithful to the Church, bearing a strong testimony to his family of the truthfulness of the gospel, the Savior and of Joseph Smith the prophet. On July 17, 1949, he died while being administered to by his grandson, S. Clyde Johnson, who was his bishop in the Jacksonville Springfield Ward. Two days later his funeral was preached by his grandson and he was laid to rest in the Swift Creek Cemetery between White Springs and Genoa beside his wife Myriem.

Myriem and Charles's daughter, Sarah Ann, was 20 years old when her mother died. She had been baptized at the age of eight. She married George Clifton Johnson, a non-member, but remained faithful to her faith as a Latter-day Saint. George was a hard worker,



and because of his occupation as a dragline operator, the couple and their children moved around a lot to grub a living during the Great Depression era. The Church was not strong in the South in those days and was even the object of much persecution. Sarah remained at home, caring for their four boys, and waited patiently for George to come to a knowledge and testimony of the truthfulness of the Restored Gospel. He finally did after some twenty-eight years, and in time to take a prominent role in the organization of the original Florida Stake organized January 19, 1947.

At that time, George was still wrestling with a Word of Wisdom problem, but when President Charles A. Callis, accompanied by Elder Harold B. Lee, both Apostles of the Church, called George in for an interview to be a High Priest, and to hold the office of Counselor in the new Springfield Ward, George made this problem known to them. He later related how Elder Callis took his hand in his and said, "But you will not smoke any more," and he didn't. He served faithfully as counselor to Bishop John T. Morrison, and in many other Church positions that followed. A few months later, his son, Stanley Clyde Johnson, returned from his mission. It was a proud moment for him when he stood to conduct the sacrament meeting in which he introduced his son as Elder Johnson and listened to him present his missionary sermon.

Both George and Sarah Ann were born in Hamilton County, Florida, at the turn of the century, only nine days apart: George on March 4th and Sarah on March 13th in 1900. They had each been born into farm families in Genoa, and George especially had to work hard in his youth because his father had lost his right hand in a saw mill accident. They met at an annual Woodmen of the World organization sponsored picnic. Both of their families attended the year they each were 11 years old. George attended school in Genoa and she attended two miles away near her home. Both had the experience of the traditional one-room school house. After they met, they did most of their courting while attending Church services and activities in the old tin-roofed tabernacle near Facil, an even smaller community between Genoa and White Springs. Not far away was a cold spring where people would go for water between services. Up the road a piece, there was also the Swift Creek Methodist Church, dating back to 1825, where they attended church occasionally. When she was 16 years old, George began to formally call upon her for dates having to walk the four miles to her home. Many times he attended cottage meetings held by the missionaries in the one-room school building where she attended. Sarah's parents thought the couple too young to court so they asked him to stay away from

their daughter for a year, and George respected their feelings on the matter. At the year's end, he returned to see her. The following year he returned once again at the year's end to see Sarah. When he was 18, George was employed at a sawmill for \$1.50 a day which was very good money in those days. When he approached her parents to ask for permission to marry their daughter, it was given, and they married August 11, 1918, amid a house filled with friends and neighbors.

The couple married in the front room of her parent's home, and spent their honeymoon in a log house well off the main road between Jasper and White Springs a few miles from his parent's home. They soon moved into a log cabin on his father's farm, and after a time he obtained work in Facil guarding prisoners on the 'chain gang' (prisoners who were chained together). Next he operated a dragline, and that required moving around from job to job. His specialty was building roads and bridges, many of which still stand today. Their son Bob was born July 20, 1922, in Mulberry as was their son Stanley Clyde Johnson on Oct 27, 1925. An older son, C.F., had been born at Sarah's parents' home June 25, 1919. Tragically, while there he became ill from eating an orange and died.

A variety of jobs took George away from home and his family. Many times he rode a Greyhound Bus to work. He eventually bought a Model A Ford sedan. The couple's parents, the Johnsons and Miltons, lived four miles apart, and with their sons, the family made regular Sunday visits which always remained a highlight of their lives. During the years, the family lived in Asheville, North Carolina, Montgomery, Huntsville, and McCullough, Alabama, the latter being where a son Cecil was born. Once they settled in Jasper, Florida, where they had many relatives. The Depression was at its peak and things were particularly rough on the family, but in 1934 George bought his family a 1934 Ford car with the front doors hinged at the rear instead of the front. They lived in Brewster by this time. From the phosphate mines in central Florida to Panama City with a construction company the family was required to live in dozens of places in and out of the state. In 1938 Bob and Clyde were sent to live with their Johnson grandparents in White Springs for steady schooling while in high school. Their parents visited when they could. Not long after, George left the C.C. Moore Co. where he worked, and settled in Jacksonville. Bob, who had graduated from High School in White Springs, married Ruby Godwin and worked in the Jacksonville shipyard during the war. Clyde joined the Navy and remained there for the rest of the war. Upon his arrival home he left immediately to serve a mission for the Church. When he returned home he was called, at the age of 21,

to be the Bishop of the Springfield Ward, replacing Bishop John T. Morrison.

Bob and his father went into business together organizing small companies involving heavy equipment, including draglines. George died on January 6, 1972, and Bob's life was cut short with cancer a few years later. George was buried in Swift Creek Cemetery next to the little Methodist Church where he courted Sarah Ann. He was laid to rest next to her.

In speaking of his father, his son, Clyde, said, "Once my dad became a member of the Church, he was a valiant man. He was dedicated. He was devoted. He was not an educated man. He was a man of common and simple pursuits and likes and dislikes. He was not sophisticated. He worked hard for a living. He was an honorable man. He was honest. He loved people, and people loved him. I remember I was his bishop and I was only twenty-one, but he recognized me and sustained me, as did my mother, all of the days that I served as their bishop. Back in that day our ward extended up into Kingsland, Georgia, and up into Folkston, Georgia, and Callahan, Florida. We had awful large ward teaching districts. I remember Dad had thirty-five families to visit every month, ranging all the way up to Kingsland and in parts of Jacksonville, and he did it all faithfully. I used to think some of the things my father did and said in the homes of members were embarrassing, but the people loved him and had a good rapport with them. And I thought, 'why argue with success'. I didn't really appreciate my father until he was dead. I guess I took him for granted. I find myself missing him and wishing I could go to him and talk with him and counsel with him, more than I ever did when he was alive. I honestly think he was a great spirit in eternity, and I look forward to the time when I can renew my association with him, and my grandfather and others whom I hold in high esteem in the heritage of my family. I'm intensely proud of the humble origins of my family."

Stanley Clyde Johnson is the only remaining person in his immediate family today. He was interviewed on June 14, 1981, by David F. Boone with the historical department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through the James Moyle Oral History Program. It is from this interview that the following highlights of his life story and contributions to the Church's growth in Florida are made. Having been born into the Church, he is a third generation Latter-day Saint. From his grandparent's conversion there have come four full-time missionaries, four bishops, and two stake presidents, one stake president's counselor, and a Sunday School superintendent.

In 1937, when he was twelve-years-old and living

with his parents in Columbia, Mississippi, where he was ordained to the priesthood, his mother gave him a five-year diary. From that day to this, he has kept a daily record of his life. Those records have helped to construct this narrative.

When Clyde's parents settled in Jacksonville after moving around for many years, he was 15 years old and a sophomore at Andrew Jackson High School on north Main Street. That was the time he became totally involved in the Church for the first time in his life.

"Even at 15 I can remember some very vivid impressions that the Church was true," he said. "It just seemed to come natural with me and I remember delighting to be a part of the Church in Jacksonville. This was before the stake was organized on January 19, 1947.

"I remember the names of people I met, foremost was Brother James R. Boone. He was quite an influence on my life and I still have correspondence that I exchanged with him when he was district president and while I was in the Navy following graduation from high school. I remember Brothers O.H. Hawkins, A.O. Jenkins, Otho Starling, Jack Lindsey, Alvin Chace and many outstanding others who were great inspirations."

While attending the University of North Carolina in 1943, WW II had been going on for two years. Clyde was transferred to the NROTC school at the University of Virginia instead of going to boot camp. He graduated from there in October 1945 with a degree in Naval ROTC Engineering and with a commission as an ensign in the Navy. Following a short tour in the Pacific, passage through the Panama Canal, and a fleet exercise in the Caribbean with a task force under Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, he was mustered out of the Navy in Boston, July 11, 1946.

"It's interesting about my homecoming," he said. "There are a number of things that are almost miraculous in my life surrounding how I met my wife and married her. I loved the Navy and would have easily made it my career, except for two things — I wanted to be active in my Church, and I wanted to raise a family. So when I came home from the Navy after three years, I still wanted to go out to the 'Y' and become an attorney. I knew that my Heavenly Father desired me to fill a mission, so I made myself go and I became a good missionary at the same time.

"When I returned from the Navy, I went to my branch president who was Johnny Rudd, and said, 'President, I have served my country for three years. Now I would like to do what I want to do for a while, but I know that I need to fill a mission. If the Lord is going to call me, let's get on with it. If He's not, let me know it.' So within a month's time I received my call and went. I was called by President Heber Meeks, who



was the president of the Southern States Mission in Atlanta, Georgia, and assigned to be with the district president, Joseph A. Barfuss, from Midvale, Utah. We toured the mission, which comprised Florida and Georgia and I think up into Tennessee, quite a vast area.

"Then I was assigned to the Edgehill or Gibson, Georgia Branch. My companion was Elder Arlen L. Meham from Utah, and we were the first missionaries at the little church which had just been completed. He and I helped build the benches and began holding services there. It was my honor to preach the first sermon in the little building."

He relates how Sister Mamie McCoy, a member, told him that 50 years prior to that time, her family had left the Baptist faith and joined the Church in the area when the missionaries came through teaching the gospel. She said they were ostracized by the community and hostility set in, especially when travelling missionaries stayed in their home. Under the leadership of some local clergy, as well as townspeople and businessmen, they marched up to her family's home with guns drawn and pulled the missionaries out. They were marched from the little town of Edgehill six miles to the little town of Gibson, where the end of the railroad was located. They put them on the train, and as they departed told them to leave and to never come back. Sister McCoy said that as they left — an Elder named Ballantyne — said to the group, "Now we will not come back, but within fifty years there will be many other Mormon missionaries in this area and they will build a chapel within five miles of this station."

"She believed that the chapel where we were sitting that day was literal fulfillment of that prophecy by this Elder," he said.

When the Florida Stake was organized on January 19, 1947, he was serving his mission in Augusta, Georgia. He requested to come home for the occasion, but the request was denied.

When his mission was completed the last of August, (he served a year, as the money that he had saved in the Navy would allow him to stay only that long), he said he felt he had now served his country and his God, and it was time to serve himself. His desire was to study law. However, he was called within five days of his mission release to the office of the Florida Stake President, Alvin C. Chace. Along with his counselors, E. Coleman Madsen, and Jacquard M. Lindsey, Sr., they called him as the bishop of his ward which was Springfield. He was 21 years old when he was sustained to that office on September 14th.

"I just saw my own personal desires going down the tube," he said. "I was headed out to the 'Y' to be an attorney. I was also planning to marry and take my wife

with me."

Five days after he accepted the call as Bishop, he married Johnnie Ruth Williams on September 19th.

"I suppose I was the youngest bishop in the Church at the time," he said. "Looking back it seems incredible that such a thing could ever have happened. I was about three years older than my oldest priest. Nevertheless, because I was not able to follow my career as an attorney, I became an engineer, not by choice, but by situation. It was the next best thing for a career that I had learned while in the Navy."

Amazingly by the age of 21 he had completed high school, obtained a college degree, been commissioned an officer in the Navy, spent almost three years in the Navy, finished a mission for the Church, been called as bishop, married the girl who he said was the answer to his prayers, and became a businessman and an engineer.

Being bishop at the age of 21 had its challenges. The stake president wanted athletics in the stake. So a joint team was organized comprising players from all the wards in Jacksonville, and they played in the softball league sponsored by the city of Jacksonville. They also played in the basketball league. He played on the same teams with the young men from the wards.

He feels that was a tremendous asset as it left some excellent impressions with the youth. As their bishop, he hired a school bus at least two or three times during the summer.

"All of us would pile in that thing and drive down to Silver Springs for an outing or drive down to Kingsley Lake for an outing. People who grew up with me as their bishop still refer to me as their bishop," he said.

At the age of 15, Clyde said he had made a deal with the Lord that if the Lord would grant him certain things he would never say no when asked to do anything in the Lord's Church. And to his knowledge he has not.

He served as bishop of the Springfield Ward in the original Florida Stake for ten years. He went to work with Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company as an engineer where he made his career. Twice his company asked him to move which meant an advancement in his career. Both times the stake presidency advised him not to take the transfer. He does not regret that he did even though he knows it affected his advancement and career. Some years later when Elder Henry D. Moyle was attending a conference of the stake, Clyde asked for an interview with him.

"I related these experiences to President Moyle and said, 'Now President, I would do again what I did then if I were asked to transfer, but I just would like to have your opinion regarding my turned-down requests for transfer with my company.' I was rather shocked at President Moyle's reply, as I was a young and impression-

able bishop, gung ho and full of vim and vigor and ‘do what the brethren say’ type of person. He said, ‘Bishop, your stake president was wrong. He should never have told you that. There’s opportunity for you to serve in the Church wherever you go, and the Lord expects you to do those things that would enable you to advance and to improve yourself economically in the world.’

When he moved out of the Springfield area, he was released as bishop and placed on the high council and at the same time called as MIA superintendent for the stake. He was called as the stake mission president while still serving on the high council. He was replaced as bishop by James R. Brannen. Shortly after that his cousin Herman Green became bishop of that ward, replacing Bishop Brannen and serving for almost ten years before his death. Then James Milton, another of his family that he grew up with as a teen-ager, became bishop of the same ward serving almost ten years.

“So that’s almost 30 years of service in that ward by three teenagers who grew up together, a son and two grandsons of my grandfather,” he noted.

Remarking further on the Springfield Ward, he said,



***Stanley Clyde Johnson***

“The Springfield Ward eventually became divided into the Jacksonville Third, Jacksonville Eighth Ward, Kingsland Ward and Fernandina and Hilliard Branches (later wards). I feel very good about the footprints my family has made in Church history,” he said.

Reflecting further on church service, he said.

“Later on, when my company asked me to transfer to Fort Lauderdale, even then before I accepted, I told my stake presidency, and they said, ‘Go.’ So this time I

went. I look back and see the wisdom of my stake presidency because I was able to continue serving as bishop in the stake and the other positions.

“When I went to Fort Lauderdale in 1959, Brother E. Coleman Madsen had preceded me to that area. He went there as the United States attorney for the South District of Florida and at that time was serving in the district presidency of the Church. A stake had not been organized there at that time. After serving on the district council and MIA superintendent, one year later the first Miami Stake was organized. I had the honor of being placed as second counselor in that stake presidency.”

He related how, the previous night before the calling, he saw in a dream, Paul Cheesman called to be the first stake president of Miami Stake. He also saw Coleman Madsen chosen as his first counselor and then himself as his second counselor. He described this dream to his wife and pondered it until midafternoon the following day when he received a phone call. He met with general authorities, Presidents Delbert Stapley, J. Byron Ravsten and William J. Critchlow, who were conducting interviews. After being called he related the dream to the brethren and they said ‘this kind of thing happens quite often, and it is confirmation that we have chosen the stake presidency the Lord desires.’

“I wrote that little story as part of the first minutes of the first historical report of the old Miami Stake,” he said.

The Miami Stake Presidency had a vast territory to cover, travelling 150 miles north to Vero Beach to Key West, 180 miles south, and all the way across the state to the Gulf of Mexico and the Fort Myers area. The men had to use their time wisely as in those days they held two sessions of conference at each ward conference, morning and afternoon. Clyde lived in Fort Lauderdale, with the other two presidency members in Miami, so he was always elected to drive the car. He said he would leave home as early as four o’clock in the morning on his way to Key West for ward conference and stop on the way to pick up Presidents Cheesman and Coleman.

“In those days super highways were non-existent,” he said, “so we had to fight the traffic lights. By the time we got to Key West for a priesthood meeting and the first session of conference and then lunch and then the second session of conference, and then after that a special fireside for the young people it was around 9:30 or 10:00 p.m. when we would leave Key West heading back home. Invariably we would get to a place about fifty miles up the Keys and Paul and Coleman had to stop and eat. Here I am, dead tired and sleepy as I can be, and driving, and they had to stop and eat a full-course meal. So we’d spend an hour and a half for those rascals to eat, and then we’d get back in the car. After I’d drop



them off in Miami it was usually three or four o'clock in the morning before I'd arrive home after 24 solid hours of driving and meetings. Those are memories that are pleasant, but I wouldn't want to live them again," he said.

At one time he remembered when the entire stake presidency were teaching early morning seminary while they served in their positions.

"There was a time when every one of our wards and branches in Miami Stake had an early morning seminary," he said.

Work among the Seminole Indians was part of the program, too.

"I remember establishing a strong rapport with Joe Dan Osceola, a descendant of the famous Chief. The members of the Church, collaborating with the Indians, went out to their reservation over on Lake Okeechobee and built a basketball court for the Indian children to play on," he said.

"I invited the leaders of the Seminole nation one weekend to go with us up to the big Church ranch in central Florida, and they accepted. Brother Leo Ellsworth was ranch director and the bishop of the ward there was the ranch foreman. They prepared the royal treatment to show the Indians everything. They also killed a couple of wild boars on the ranch the day before and had those things charcoaling and barbecuing out there on the ranch when we arrived. Those Indians really enjoyed that. We took them on a tour, showed them our cattle breeding and raising processes, how we made little feed pellets in our little mill from the grasses, what kind of cross breeding we did, and examples of artificial insemination. The Indians were quite impressed.

"About a month later they responded with an invitation to us to visit their reservation, which we did. They served us pork ribs and chicken that had been barbecued and charcoaled and they took us over their reservation and showed us their government-sponsored and financed activities.

"While I was in the Miami area and involved with Joe Dan and the other Seminoles I don't know of a single one who became converted. I've kept my association open with Joe Dan Osceola and we have a close relationship. In fact, the Lamanite Generation performed in the Parker Playhouse in Fort Lauderdale and I invited Joe Dan and his family. Out of fondness I presented him with a little presentation and he gave me a little clay Indian which I still have. He's impressed with the Church and wants his children to attend the "Y".

During his interval in Miami he entertained many of the Church authorities in his home. He has an autographed copy of Mormon Doctrine from Bruce

McConkie. Once when Brother S. Dilworth came, he wrote Sister Johnson a letter and was very specific.

"He said, 'I'd like to have this for breakfast, and I'd like to have that. I would like to have hard-boiled eggs for breakfast,'. And she had never fixed hard-boiled eggs in her life and she didn't know how to fix them. But when he arrived he was gracious about it. He came in early in the morning before conference and he said, 'Now, sister Johnson, I'll show you how to fix those eggs.' And he showed her.

"At first I strongly resented the tendency of the Twelve Apostles to guard their positions jealously. It was surprising to me how those men would come and, in moments of personal conversation and reflection, criticize each other politically and things like that, and how especially among the Twelve they would be rough on the Seventy. I thought, 'Can these be General Authorities? Is this proper?' I don't mean by that that they were vindictive. I just mean that they would criticize, not extensive, but little thoughts would drop here and there.

"At any rate, as a result of the things they would say, I got the opinion that the Twelve were extremely jealous of their position. They didn't want anybody encroaching on their authority and I resented that. I've always been humble, I thought. My position as stake president made me a servant of all the people. I've always felt that while I might be the stake president, I was the servant of all mankind. Even to the lowest beggar under the bridge at night who has no other place to sleep. I am his servant as a priesthood bearer. So I was offended in a sense by these General Authorities, the Twelve especially.

"But after some reflection, I have come now to appreciate that. Thank God they are jealous of their position, because in the original dispensation they weren't. The original Twelve Apostles, back in the days following Christ, allowed things to creep in and others to usurp authority and that kind of thing. Now I've come to the belief that it's important, for these twelve men to know and for the Church and the world to know that they are the Twelve, under the direction of the First Presidency, of course, but they are the Twelve and they run the Church. I have grown to realize that that's the way it ought to be. They've got to be strong to hold their positions.

"In those days it was the custom for the general authorities to stay with the stake presidents, and many of them did. I remember once when one of the Seventies, Alma Sonne, a very large man, came. He insisted that we put him in a motel room. I didn't know why until later when someone asked me if he had ever visited in our stake and if he stayed with us. When I told them he stayed in a motel, they told me why. It seems, as a man

of some 300 pounds, he had broken the beds in some of the homes where he stayed, so instead of suffering that humiliation and embarrassment he stayed in a motel.

"We had quite a number of the authorities, and that was one of the highlights of our experience in the stake presidency. The little booklet that President Kimball wrote to my sons, thanking them for using their beds during the weekend, is choice and precious to us. Brother Harold B. Lee, when he came to release President Cheesman, and to appoint me, stayed with President Cheesman, so therefore he never stayed in our home.

Miami Stake was organized in 1960. In 1963 President Cheesman accepted a position at Brigham Young University and left Miami. Coleman Madsen was transferring with his attorney profession back up to Jacksonville, so Clyde said President Harold B. Lee came to the Miami Stake to reorganize. He became the new stake president, and served there until 1970. In that year the Fort Lauderdale Stake, by division of Miami Stake, was organized and he became that Stake's first president. In 1973, he was transferred back to Jacksonville by the phone company.

After his release as president of the Fort Lauderdale Stake in 1973, he was called to serve as the State of Florida public communications coordinator, a now defunct title.

"At that time we were trying to get Church public communications off and running for the entire state of Florida with a state-wide coordinator. When we divided the state into several different regions and regional representatives of the Twelve took over, they saw fit to discontinue that program. I had the honor of serving as its one and only coordinator during the time it existed, for about two or three years."

Setting an example, especially for youth, is something Clyde says is still very important to him. During his mission he said he developed an appreciation for and a strong rapport with his Heavenly Father and discipline for his life. Those principles helped him throughout his life.

"I suppose my enthusiasm and sincerity, as well as personal dedication, have been ingredients that have probably been instrumental in enabling me to leave a good impression with all ages wherever I've been. Those ingredients are absolutely necessary. You must be sincere in what you do, not being two-faced, not saying one thing and doing another. My people knew I'd never ask them to do anything that I would not do. I've always believed there are three things that people who are successful possess, and one day while studying the Doctrine and Covenants I found where the Lord Himself gives the answer to what success is. It's in the 107th section, verse 99. The three ingredients are knowledge, work, and

enthusiasm. Now listen to what the Lord says:

"Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty,( knowledge), and to act (work), in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence (enthusiasm).

"An example of this is when I was made the stake mission president. Brother Keith Gordon was my counselor, and we made it our business, if we asked our missionaries to devote 100 hours per month exclusively to missionary service, we would do more than them every month. We would devote more hours than they would. We made comparative reports and showed them how many hours they had spent and how many hours we had spent. So we always made it our business to set the example, not just in words, but in our deeds.

"By the way, I have through the years, since I was a missionary and young bishop, assembled, organized, retained, and filed all my notes for all my talks. When you research a subject it will be as true fifty years from today as it is today, so keep your notes, and file them.

"I was always involved in athletics and loved playing ball. I remember when I was 14, and in a football game against Jennings Florida High School that I punted the ball 75 yards, to everyone's astonishment. That punt is remembered to this day by some who were there, more than a half century ago. I've always felt very keenly that younger children or people younger than I, might be following me as an example, so I've always felt an obligation to set a good example. I had parents, not members of the Church, come to me and say, 'I'm sure glad you go to our school because of the example you set for our young people,' he said. "In all of my youth, Naval career, college career and in business, I have never been asked nor expected to violate a single standard I've ever made for myself, a standard of cleanliness and uprightness, just to be popular or to be successful, never...at any time. The reputation that Mormon people enjoy of being good, honest, hard-working, decent, patriotic people is something I'm proud of."

He remembers an incident when someone's behavior made things very difficult for the Church.

"My family was not a part of the Church at the time, because there was no Church there at the time. Maybe this isn't exactly the right thing to be included in a history, but it's history nevertheless, and though it be negative and not particularly tasty, it should be mentioned. Apparently many years ago a couple of our missionaries became involved with a young lady in Hamilton County and as a result were sent home in dishonor. From that point on, it seemed that that whole county became hostile toward the Mormon Church. And for many, many years Mormonism was very unpopular in that county, and still is today, except that there's a small branch now being started over in White Springs.



"In all fairness to the young missionaries, I might mention that though they went home in dishonor, they remained faithful to the Church, came back in and later on descendants from that one young lady and this one young missionary themselves filled missions and became honorable in the Church. But it did leave a blight on the movement of the Church in Hamilton County.

While serving the Church in Miami, Clyde initiated what they called the 'temple building program,' a forerunner to the present-day Church program in which the Stake assumes the obligation for constructing buildings instead of the individual ward. That was before the program became accepted throughout the whole Church, he explained. He has a volume containing the history of its organization with such details as the first person to make a donation to that temple building program. He has records of what each ward contributed and which individuals in the wards made contributions.

Clyde has always considered his work and service to the Church in the South his mission in life. In addition to his daily journal and diaries, he has kept personal copies of all of his correspondence, outgoing and incoming, both as bishop and as stake president of two stakes, except of course confidential and sensitive material. His collection includes correspondence when he was stake MIA superintendent, stake mission president, high councilor, and every office he has ever held. He has also kept a personal record of all the callings of others to stake positions during the entire 13 year period that he was involved in or presided over both the Miami Stake and the Fort Lauderdale Stake. Those records contain the name of the individual, the office that he was called to, the date he was set apart, by whom, and the date he was released. That means he has a copy of the original organization of both those stakes, along with changes, releases, sustaining, settings apart, and ordinations for the 13 year period. He included names of missionaries who were called from the stake, where they served, when they left, returned. Anything that can be considered of a historical nature in both those stakes and in the old Springfield Ward he has kept copies. His personal record collection chronicling the growth of the Church in the South is massive, perfectly organized and in immaculate condition. He is a resourceful person, who shares freely with anyone who shows an interest in his collection. In addition, to beginning his daily diary at the age of 12, he has gone back further than that and filled in everything he can remember from his earliest recollection until he has almost a daily record of his entire life.

"I've always felt close to my work in the Church in the South, and I feel that the Master has allowed us, my wife and me, and our family to leave a pretty fair footprint almost all over the whole state of Florida. We've

seen many stakes organized and when I was a boy there were none.

"Even to this day I would consult my stake presidency before I would take a transfer my company has to offer."

There is no doubt President Clyde Johnson has developed close personal relationships with people, not only throughout the Church in Florida, but throughout business circles as well. He has a strong devotion to his Heavenly Father, and through the discipline he has mastered of his personal life, his character goes untarnished. His commitment and devotion to the gospel of Jesus Christ is known by all who know and esteem him.

The Johnsons met when they were students in Hamilton County and as Clyde puts it, "We weren't sweethearts then, but I think we were 'sweet' on each other."

"Johnnie Ruth Williams was not a member of the Church then," he said. "After I moved to Jacksonville, she and her family moved to Jacksonville Beach. By this time we were sort of dating occasionally, but we broke up, primarily because she was not a member of the Church and I was. I didn't know how to teach her the gospel, and part of my 'deal' with my Heavenly Father had been to marry somebody in the temple."

While in the Navy Clyde received a Dear John letter from his girl back home, a member of the Church. Meanwhile, his wife received a Dear John letter from the young man she had been courting. While sitting in his compartment aboard ship preparing to leave the Navy he read a Christmas card from Johnnie Ruth that said, 'Write sometime' on the bottom of it.

"The notion came to me to write her, which I did immediately. She replied immediately, and when I read her reply I said, 'This girl is going to be my wife.' And she was not a member, but it was a vivid impression that she would become my wife," he said.

A month later he was released from the Navy and immediately went to see her.

"I told her, 'I'd like to get married but I have an obligation to my Heavenly Father to go on a mission. You're not a member of the Church, and you've got a year to study the Church. And if you become a member of the Church, we'll be married when I come back.'"

He left for his mission. She agreed to investigate the Church. He explained everything to his mission president, Heber Meeks.

"I told him I would like to have the opportunity of going home and baptizing her, and he said, 'All right.'"

A few months later, 22 year-old Johnnie Ruth said she was ready and President Meeks kept his word. Clyde returned to baptize her.

"Now he doesn't know this, but I also became

engaged to her that same night,” said Clyde. “But nothing happened that would be out of line for a missionary. I didn’t even kiss her that I remember. I just gave her a ring and baptized her the same day.”

The couple married upon his return home just five days after he was called to be bishop of the Springfield Ward.

“Between her and my mother I guess they’re probably two of the most dynamic influences on my life,” he said. “She is remarkable, she has to be to live through what she has. Think about it. She had been a member of the Church less than a year, and her fiancé becomes bishop. Five days later that fiancé is her husband. Then a year and a half later she has a child. For our honeymoon we went to St. Augustine. I was made bishop on a Sunday, we were married the following Friday, went on a honeymoon to St. Augustine on a Saturday, and I was back in the pulpit on Sunday.

“For the next 25 years of our lives that’s the way it was. She raised our five kids and for many, many years she and my children never knew me except as the bishop or the stake president standing in the pulpit. And all of this time without the first word of complaint, without the first murmuring as though her lot were hard. She is the only member of her family who is a member of the Church. Her parents are devout Baptist.. She has served in just about every position that a woman can serve in in the Church both on a ward and stake level, both as counselor and the actual president herself, president of the Young Women’s organization in the Jacksonville West Stake. She is a remarkable woman, and an answer to prayer for me as any man ever had a prayer answered. She was honored as the Woman of the Year in the Orange Park First Ward when we lived there.”

The Johnson children grew up to be honorable men and women and share a genuine closeness with their parents. In his interview Clyde expressed a feeling shared by many Latter-day Saint parents who have devoted their time and energies to the gospel and their families.

“I can’t say that my children have followed the path that I have followed and been totally devoted to and active in the Church. They were active when they were younger only because Dad required it. But when they got to the point where they thought for themselves, they elected to go their own way, and even though they hold the priesthood they are not active in that priesthood, they’re not magnifying it, and they’re not active in the Church.

“It hurts personally when you see that kind of thing and you want to rationalize. You want to find a crutch. I ask myself whether it was wrong to be made bishop when I was twenty-one, whether it was wrong to accept being made the stake president when I was thirty-four.

Did I neglect my family, as some would say, to become a ‘Churchaholic’? Did I do any of these things. I don’t believe so. Would I do the same things over again if I were to be asked to? If I had to live my life over again, I’m afraid I’d say yes. Whatever be the fault that has caused my family, my sons and my daughter, to not hold the interest in the Church that I hold, I assume the full responsibility for it, but it’s a tremendous mystery how one with such a background as my own and such a love and devotion for his family could at this stage in my life not claim one single member of my family, other than my wife and myself, to be active in the Church.”

He wonders if the rise of the culture changes and influences of the changing morals of the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s influenced his children the 18 years they lived in South Florida. His oldest son, David, characterized this once when he told his dad, “Until we were in junior high school, you and Mother were our very lives. What you did, we did. When you slept, we slept. When you ate, we ate. Where you went, we went. We were a family. But when we got to the junior high school age of our lives, I’m afraid that I was too weak to resist the peer pressures placed upon me, and I allowed those peer pressures to exceed the influence of you and Mother.”

“I have every hope, every faith, that the time will come when my total family, including my grandchildren to the latest generation and my ancestors to the earliest generation, will become as devoted and dedicated to their Heavenly Father as I am at this time,” he said with resolve.

Genealogy and the gathering of historical records of the Church in the South have become a great passion for him as he reaches his declining years. Reflecting, he says, “I think that there should never arise a generation of young people who live in this stake area but what at some time during every year the entire sacrament service and every Sunday School class should be given over to teaching our people, as a reminder, the tremendous heritage we have for the Church here in Jacksonville. When a person dies in consequence of a great work he is doing, his death usually pronounces a sacred responsibility and heritage on the area and on the movement. And we are blessed with such a heritage in the South that every generation should always be taught and none should ever forget.

“I’m hopeful that somehow, some way this might be a tool for seeing my immediate family, all the way down to the latest generation and to the earliest generation, become a powerful family for my Heavenly Father. If desires and prayers will make it so, and faith and hope, then I’m sure it will be,” he said.



*"I don't say this bragging, but I guess in those two years I baptized more people per missionary than any companion that I was ever with. But I worked with the people. What ever they were doing I did it with them. If they were planting corn, I planted corn. If they were gathering fodder, I gathered fodder. Then the ones that were interested would come to the meeting. We didn't pass back through but about every six weeks, but I'd stop by to see them and if they were working I'd work with them at what they were doing.*

*Wilford Watts Jordan*

## *Wilford Watts Jordan Baptizing in rivers*



*"Of course, especially while we were country missionaries, we ate what the people gave us. I've eaten enough worms in black-eyed peas to kill any ordinary fellow. And I knew there was worms in it. That's all those people had. For breakfast many a morning we had plain old hog fat, melted hog grease on bread, and that's what we ate for breakfast. Lots of times we didn't get any dinner, but usually we had an evening meal of some type.*

*Wilford Watts Jordan*



*"My companions used to say, 'We didn't come out here to scrub floors or pick cotton. We came out here to teach the gospel', and I'd say, 'Well, I am teaching the gospel'. One companion said, 'Well, if you are stupid enough to get out there and work your butt off, you go ahead, but I'm going to stay at the house'. But through this I was blessed in getting acquainted with the people and baptizing many of them.*

*Wilford Watts Jordan*

# WILFORD WATTS JORDAN

## 1919–1985

Like Paul of old, Wilford Jordan had to be converted to the gospel. Like Paul of old, when he was converted, he became a monumental force converting throngs of people to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To the Saints in Florida, and those in south Georgia, he was the ultimate missionary in the area. When someone needed converting, they called ‘Brother Jordan’. And ‘Brother Jordan’ came, regardless of the conditions or circumstances in his life.

His story, as told in a 1981 interview with David Boone, an employee of the Religious Instruction Support Services staff at Brigham Young University, began the 29th of December in 1919. Born in humble circumstances to Calhoun and Annie Omega (Griffis) Jordan in Fowlers Bluff, Florida, Wilford, the ninth child of the Jordans, was merely an unnamed male infant when the Mormon missionaries stopped by his parents’ house looking for a night’s lodging. The Jordans were previously friendly to the missionaries even though they were not members of the Church. They were willing to share what they had with the men they considered ‘servants of God’. The missionaries usually came by once a year travelling through on foot. They would stay with the Jordan family anywhere from a week to ten days, long enough for Sister Annie Jordan to repair their clothing and to tend to other business they may have in the area. If any of them were ill, they’d come and stay with the Jordans until they were physically able to go about their missionary activities.

On this particular visit the missionaries asked Sister Annie Jordan if her son had been blessed. She didn’t understand what they were talking about, so the missionaries explained the blessing to her. She consented for her baby son to be blessed but wanted to wait until her husband came in from work. When the Elder that was to bless him asked the child’s name, he was told the baby had not yet been named. Then something almost prolific happened. The missionary got permission to give Annie’s son his name, Wilford Watts and added the child’s rightful surname Jordan. And so it came to be that when Elder Wilford Watts blessed the Jordan’s child that day he voiced these words, “He will grow up and be active in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and his life will preserved against the malaria and the typhoid and others fevers that abound in the Suwannee River area,” and then the final words, “He will fill a mission for the Church.”

Calhoun Jordan marveled as to how the missionary knew these things. He asked the missionary who

explained to him that he wasn’t speaking in and of himself, but that he was speaking as he felt inspired to speak.

Annie Jordan was already interested in the gospel, and this occasion caused her husband to be more yielding. She was baptized, but her husband had a Word of Wisdom problem that prevented him from joining with her. Finally the missionaries told him that if he would be baptized he would lose the desire for moonshine whiskey, and that he would also lose the desire for tobacco. He was to testify in the years to come that after his baptism the desire for these things completely left him although he had been a very heavy pipe smoker. The Jordans were baptized while living in Fowler’s Bluff. Since the family’s only contact with the Mormon Church was rare visits of the Elders, they attended the Methodist Church which had circuit preachers of varying faiths. One Wilford specifically remembers kept the window open down near the pulpit, so that while he talked he could spit the tobacco juice out of the window.

The Jordan family moved around a lot while Calhoun worked for the Cummers-Cypress Company. They bought what staples they had to have from the company commissary and got all their meat from either the river or the woods. Wilford learned early on to be a master outdoorsman like his father.

Though he barely remembers his life before age six, he clearly remembers when the missionaries would stop by his home. After his family left the Suwannee River area and moved to Otter Creek, he learned about the power of the priesthood on one of their visits. His brother had spinal meningitis and was being treated by the company doctor. After observing the youth one night, with his body drawn backward until it almost reached his feet, the physician told his father to make arrangements because he would be dead by morning.

During the night the missionaries came. They told Annie Jordan that they had walked more than 25 miles that afternoon and evening because one of them felt inspired to come. Annie told them about her son and that she had been praying for them to come. They immediately administered to the child and by the next morning the seven-and-a-half year old boy was much improved. Though he had to learn to walk again, he recovered.

When Wilford was seven-years-old his family moved to Jacksonville, and there they found an active organization of the Church. The chapel sat on the corner of Park and Copeland Streets and his parents became active participants. As he grew up, Wilford described himself as semi-active.

When he was 16 something changed his life.

“I remember real well that we were going home from Sunday School one day, and had invited Brother Rudy



Rudd to have lunch with us. We'd just had a fast and testimony meeting, and I was a little upset anyway, aggravated, and as we started home Brother Rudd began to enumerate how he knew the Church was true. And he finally said he knew the Book of Mormon was true. I knew better, but I turned to him and said, 'Brother Rudd, I think you are just a liar. I just don't believe that. You're just talking. That's the thing that disgusts me with the Church. Everybody gets up and says they know Joseph Smith was a true prophet, they know the Book of Mormon is true, they know there's a living prophet today, and I think all of you are just a bunch of damned liars.' It's a wonder my father hadn't slapped me, because he didn't put up with any foolishness. But I guess it startled him as bad as it did me. But the conversation ended and we went home. I just knew what was going to come, just as sure as anything I knew exactly what was going to happen to me. But I was still angry and a little temperamental about the situation.

"So we had lunch, and after lunch was over my father finally called me out on the porch and I thought, 'Well, this is it.' But he called me over and said, 'Come over here, I want to talk to you, son.' He asked me the question, 'Don't you know this Church is true?' I said, 'Dad, what aggravates me is that everybody says it's the only true church on the face of the earth. Don't you know that there's good Christian people in a lot of these other faiths? In fact, the girl I'm dating is a Methodist, and she's just as good as any Mormon girl I ever went with in my life. In fact, she's better than some that I've been with.' He said, 'Well, let's put it this way: First, you know what you did coming home was wrong.' I said, 'Yes, I'm aware of that, and I expected you to whip me'. He said, 'Well, I'm not going to, but I want you to understand one thing. It may not be the only Church on the earth that teaches a truth, but it's the only Church on the earth that teaches all the truths of Jesus Christ.' I said, 'Well, that makes more sense to me. That doesn't irritate me so bad.' Then he said, 'Now if you don't know it's true and if you don't know that the Book of Mormon is true, it's high time you found out, because if you don't, you might become inactive in the Church. I've heard you say it was true before.' I told him the only reason I said it was because he and Mama said it. I just figured that it must be true. But I don't really know it. And I don't think it's the only true Church on the earth. I think all these other churches have truths in them too.' So he told me, 'Well, now is the time you better find out.' I said, 'Well, how do you go about that?' And he explained to me that if I wanted to know if it was true to read the Book of Mormon. I'd read in the Book of Mormon, but I'd never read it all.

"I was a poor reader anyway, didn't like to read in the

first place, and when I looked at that Book of Mormon I said, 'My goodness, I'll be dead with old age before I read all that.' But I really wanted to know whether it was true or not, so before I really began to read it, I asked the Lord in simple prayer to help me know whether the book was true or not.

"So as I sat down and began to read the Book of Mormon, I didn't hear a voice but I had a burning within my bosom and a conviction within my mind that it was true. And before I finished reading in Alma about this, in the fortieth chapter....I remember the scripture well and still remember it to this day, Alma 40:7-13, I had a conviction and feeling that I knew it was the truth. From that day on I've been thoroughly convinced the Book of Mormon was true."

Wilford's first calling came while he was yet a priest.

"So they ordained me a priest and A.L. Ferriera, Jr., who was Sunday School superintendent, asked me if I'd serve as his counselor. That was my first responsibility other than passing the sacrament."

Wilford immediately demonstrated leadership ability. While serving in the Sunday School organization he noticed that the children and adults met together. He suggested that two separate Sunday Schools be held, one for the seniors and one for the children. The District leader wrote to Church Headquarters in Salt Lake and they wrote back that it wasn't usually the procedure but they could try it, and thus began Junior Sunday School in the area.

He was soon working in the district Sunday School presidency of the Church. When he reached the age of 22, he was asked if he would like to go on a mission. He told them he couldn't afford it. He was then told that there was help available if he would go. A member of the Church by the name of A.O. Jenkins had set up a mission fund and would help any one wanting to serve if they were worthy to go. Wilford accepted and two of his sisters also agreed to help.

"We had one mission in the Southern states and it took in five states," he said. The Mission President was William P. Whitaker and he talked to me and before the day was over I was called to serve a mission in Alabama. I had a Ford automobile that was about two-years-old, and he told me to bring it with me.

"I hated to tract. That was the worst job I ever had in my life, but my missionary companion said, 'Just wait until you start to hold street meetings'. I told him I didn't intend to hold street meetings."

Then shortly after that they took me and made me a country Elder. The mission president mailed me and my companion 100-150 cards with member's names and route addresses on them. My companion was Elder Galloway, a red-headed missionary from Idaho. Our

responsibility was to find out if these people still lived there and if they still agreed to be members of the Church or anything we could find out about the family. Then we were to put the information on the back of the card and send it back to the mission home.

Then Wilford learned another lesson that would serve him well the remainder of his life.

“Elder Galloway was a good missionary,” he said, “but he was real temperamental. Because he knew the scriptures real well all he wanted to do was debate or criticize other people’s religion and start a discussion to prove them wrong and that we were right. In the process of doing it, he’d get mad and his face would turn red and he’d just get all excited until he would shake all over.

“One day I told him, ‘Elder Galloway, someday I hope I can have a command of the scriptures like you have, but one thing you’ve got that I don’t want is that I don’t want to be antagonistic and make people angry. But I want to gain the ability of teaching the gospel to any person so that they can understand it, not that they’ll know it’s true, but so they can understand it and ask the Lord if it’s true or not.

“One of the mission rules was that we hold a street meeting at least once a week someplace. We stopped in one little town, outside of Townley, Alabama, and people would throw us pennies and some of them would give us money. One of my companions said, ‘You know, we don’t have a paid ministry, Elder Jordan.’ But I told him, ‘Well, it’s no use letting the money go to waste. Tell them to throw us all they will.’ So I’d take it and put it in my pocket.

“We were holding a street meeting right outside of Birmingham. We started out with a song, no accompanist or nothing. Then we started speaking. Just about the time Elder Dalton started to speak, one of the local ministers walked up and just slapped him till he staggered. I mean, he really cold-cocked him right to the side of the jaw. The Elder just shook his head, kind of got his equilibrium back again, and he turned the other cheek and told that minister, ‘Slap that one too’. Some of the minister’s congregation were there and he lost his church because of the way he acted.

“At another street meeting a minister told us he would have us thrown off the street, and he tried. When he found out he couldn’t he told me, ‘I’ll knock hell out of you right here on this court square.’ I told him, ‘Well, I can’t keep you from hitting me, Reverend, but

when you hit me, you better duck, because I’m going to break you from the habit.’ I’ve held many street meetings after that, but that’s the only street meeting that I know of at any time in my mission for a little over two years that we ever baptized anybody from. The family got interested at first in the argument, then that we were brazen enough that we didn’t let this preacher scare us. The family we baptized went by the surname of Went.”

Wilford was soon called as a district president, covering the entire North Alabama District.

“In those days we didn’t have a mission plan. That was one of my first prerogatives when I became district president. I have the first one I ever wrote, and then I

wrote another one while I was there. The main thing we used was *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*. We would hand out tracts, like *Baptism, the Lord’s Tenth*, or the *Plan of Salvation* or whatever it might be. That’s the way we’d pick our subjects. If it was a baptism tract, one of us would speak on repentance and the other one baptism. Of course you had to quote the Bible. I’m grateful that we had to, because I gained a pretty good knowledge of the scriptures. We’d tell them about the restoration and then the *Book of Mormon*. Some would buy the book just so they could stand there and tear the book up. I learned early in my mission not to let people agitate you.

“Then I had to get rid of my car when the missionaries were introduced to the bicycles in our area. It was about the latter part of 1941 or early 42.

“People used to call us draft dodgers during the war. When I first went into the mission field we had 23 missionaries in my district. Before my mission was complete, missionaries were getting less and less because they were all going in the service. People still called those of us out in the mission field ‘draft dodgers’.



*Young Wilford Jordan in Missionary Work*



“Later I was transferred to South Carolina and worked with a companion that had a car of his own. In those days the missionaries furnished their own car. I began to travel with a man by the name of McBride. He was the district president, and also worked for the government. If a man got killed in the service and if he had children, his responsibility was to go and find the wife and the children and to be sure that the wife was using the money from the dead husband’s compensation for the benefit of the children. If she wasn’t dependable, then it was his responsibility to find somebody that was, the nearest kin, etc. Of course in doing this and working with him in this, we got to preach the gospel to a lot of people.

“I came home the first of March of 1943. My mission was over. I’d already signed up for the draft. Anybody that was a minister or included in ministerial activities, they considered us in a 4-D classification. At the time there was a man by the name of Larry Rast that was branch president in the branch at Park and Copeland Streets, and they called me to be his first counselor. I took my draft card to the Jacksonville office. I never will forget the woman’s name. It was Poteet. I introduced myself to her and told her who I was. She said, ‘Oh, you’re one of those Mormon preachers.’ I told her I was. She said, ‘Well, I know a little bit about you. I’ve interviewed a few of them. You’ll still remain 4-D and you’ll be exempt.’”

“When I was President Rast’s first counselor he put me in charge of the USO groups that the Church had something to do with. The regular USO’s were so bad at that particular time they didn’t want our LDS personnel going to them. So my responsibility was to rent halls and to furnish recreation for the LDS people. They called me a church coordinator. As I did this, we had many problems, drunks coming in and trying to throw us out and things of this nature.

“Then I’d had a missionary companion in the North Alabama District named Wilford Christensen. He would argue with a telephone pole and while we were together, he threatened to whip me several times, but I’d always talk him out of it. He came out as a problem person and back in that day, if a person couldn’t get along in the ward or in Church, or if they were about to leave the Church or were juvenile delinquents, they got sent into the mission field to reform them. And we had quite a time with some. Tracing back, I remember some of them would be so drunk when they got off the train they could hardly stand up. We’d have to put them in a car and take them to the mission home. They’d shoot craps and play cards all the way from Salt Lake out here. They didn’t fly. They came out on the train.

“But anyway, this Elder Christensen was a character.

So they’d had him with several companions and they just couldn’t do anything with him, so they gave him to me. They told me if I couldn’t do anything with him to return him to the mission home and they’d send him back home. So I made up my mind I was going to do all I could to salvage him, which I did. He was the last missionary companion I had in the North Alabama District. Anyway, we got so close to each other that he told me that he really loved me, and I told him I loved him, and we were like two brothers. He had another year before his mission was over, and he told me that when his mission was over he was going to come wherever I was and take me home with him. I told him, ‘All right. Come on by. I’ll go home with you,’ not realizing what I said.

“I’d been home about a year before he got released and I had a job and everything else. And lo and behold, he showed up one day. I worked at A&P Company in the warehouse. I’d worked with them before I went on my mission. He showed up over there one day and he said, ‘Well, I’ve come to get you to take you West. He had Elder Coates and a couple of other Elders with him, all supposed to go West. He had an old car, and at that time gas rationing was really first class, but they gave him enough gas rationing tickets to go from wherever their mission call was until they got home. When I left in 1943 we had gone from twenty-three missionaries down to four, and they were older couples that didn’t face the draft. That was the total of missionaries in my district in South Carolina. The Church had quit calling missionaries that were eligible for the draft. They encouraged them to go serve their country.

“Anyway, I talked to the people I worked for and told him I wanted some time off. He said if I left I’d lose my job. I was single, with no particular ties, so I quit and went West.

“We talked about our missions all the way there, who taught who and who baptized who. We talked about the people we had met and just in general some of the memories we shared, like back in that day and time, especially when you were a country missionary, you just went from farm to farm and you had to go out where the families were picking cotton or plowing, or whatever they were doing. We just went out in the field with them and walked right along with them and told them who we were. Then that night we’d hold what we called a cottage meeting.

“I don’t say this bragging, but I guess in those two years I baptized more people per missionary than any companion that I was ever with. But I worked with the people. What ever they were doing I did it with them. If they were planting corn, I planted corn. If they were gathering fodder, I gathered fodder. Then the ones that

were interested would come to the meeting. We didn't pass back through but about every six weeks, but I'd stop by to see them and if they were working I'd work with them at what they were doing.

"My companions used to say, 'We didn't come out here to scrub floors or pick cotton. We came out here to teach the gospel', and I'd say, 'Well, I am teaching the gospel'. One companion said, 'Well, if you are stupid enough to get out there and work your butt off, you go ahead, but I'm going to stay at the house'. But through this I was blessed in getting acquainted with the people and baptizing many of them.

"Most of the places we had purse and script, but occasionally if we had missionaries who wouldn't humble themselves, we'd take all their money, leave them with their pocketbook, give them some copies of the Book of Mormon, and go back and pick them up a week later at the same place. Back then we weren't commanded to stay with a companion.

"Of course, especially while we were country missionaries, we ate what the people gave us. I've eaten enough worms in black-eyed peas to kill any ordinary fellow. And I knew there was worms in it. That's all those people had. For breakfast many a morning we had plain old hog fat, melted hog grease on bread, and that's what we ate for breakfast. Lots of times we didn't get any dinner, but usually we had an evening meal of some type.

"We finally arrived in Salt Lake. Now all during my mission I objected and resented the fact that Westerners should marry Southerners or that Southerners should marry Westerners, because in that day and time our differences were so great. While I was district president I knew of several sad experiences where they did marry and it never did work out. The Elders were kidding me that I was coming out West to find a Western wife, but I said, 'Never will I marry a Western woman.'

"Well I'd never been out West and I'd never been to the temple. Back in that day you weren't required to go West to attend the temple before you filled a mission and that was the major reason I'd wanted to come West. So the first thing I did when I got to the West was go home with Elder Christensen and we began to work on his automobile. He kept asking me if I wanted a date and I'd tell him, 'No, thank you'. One day we went uptown to get some automobile parts. I had some britches on that was big enough that I guess you and me both could have gotten in them. I'd run out of dress clothes as I'd only planned to stay two weeks and after that I was using any kind of clothes I could get while the others were being laundered. Lo and behold, while we were uptown we met his aunt. Her name was Derbyshire. She said, 'Oh my goodness, Chris, you've

got to come in and see Virginia.' Now he had told me about his cousin Virginia, and some other cousins too. In fact he had some good looking sisters himself. But I wasn't interested in a Western girl. But we went into this surgical supply place where she worked and as we walked back to the office where she was I just kind of held back. But when I looked at her, it came to me just as plain and I could hear it just as plain as if you'd said it, 'That's the girl you're going to marry'. It came so plain, but I said, 'No, no, not me.' And I said it out loud. Elder Christensen turned around and said, 'What did you say?' I said, 'Oh, I'm just talking to myself'. He said, 'Well, come on up here and meet my cousin'.

"So I went up and shook her hand and told her I was glad to know her. She thought I was bald-headed because I had a hat pulled down to here because it was so cold. When we left her mother turned to her and asked if she had seen me, and she said, 'Yes, I saw him. He's bald-headed'. Her aunt said, but that's the man you're going to marry'. And her daughter said, 'Well, I might, if I ever see him again'.

"When we left the surgical shop I told Chris I never wanted to see that girl again and I told him what came to me. I said, 'I heard it, Chris. But I don't love her and I don't want to marry her, I have no affection for her. I don't ever want to see her again, because if I see her again, I'll marry her'. He said, 'Boy, you are really out of your tree.'

"We went to a dance and I told him I did not want a girl. So unbeknown to me, he called her up and invited her to the dance. He told her she was going with Elder Jordan. He never told me but he got me a date with her and him one with another girl. When we got in the car he said we were going by to pick up Virginia and I could ride in the back seat with her. At first I told him I would not do it, but when he picked up his girl we went on and picked up Virginia. We went in her house and I was introduced to her mother and her father and then we took off to the dance.

"After a while at the dance I told her to let's go out and sit in the car or something because I didn't like to dance. She said she did, so I told her I'd just go sit down. But she said, if I was going to do that she would just go outside with me. I proceeded to tell her how I felt about Western girls and she said, 'Well, who's going to get married anyway? I haven't proposed to you.' I said, 'Well, I just want to let you know where we stand right to start with, then we won't have any problems.'

"So we got that settled. I took her home and she's the first girl that I can remember that I ever kissed good-night the first time I went with her, but I kissed her goodnight and told her I'd see her sometime, maybe.

"Elder Christensen and his family got us together



every time they could, and on our second date I proposed to her. She asked me to stay for Christmas but I told her I hadn't been home for three Christmases and I'd promised my mama I'd come back. She wanted me to call Mama and tell her, but I told her I was also out of money. She said, 'Well call on my daddy's phone,' so I did, and I ended up staying out there for Christmas.

"I told her I would not marry then, but would go home and stay for a year, or at least six months, and if we still felt the same way I'd come back and we would get married, so that's the way we left it.

"I was riding back home with Ruth Boone and her children who were visiting in Snowflake, Arizona, and by the time I arrived there I was lonesome. I called her to come but her mother wouldn't let her come because if her daughter got married she wanted it to be in the temple. So I came on back home and we corresponded. By April I couldn't stand it, so I rode the bus back out West, and we were married in the temple on May 12, 1944, and she's been a Southerner ever since.

"We rode the bus back to Florida. In those days buses drove thirty-five miles an hour. Trains were full because of the service people. And if you got on a bus and a service personnel got on, you had to get up and give them your seat. You took what was left. About two-thirds of the way back we couldn't sit together. She had to sit in one seat and I had to sit in another. It took a week, night and day, to get home and I had spent a week getting there.

"I was still a counselor in the branch presidency and coordinator for the Church. A & P hired me back. Then Mrs. Poteet called me one day and said I'd been classified 1-A and would be leaving with the next group. I told her about my marriage and she said she would try and somehow it got all worked out.

"The Florida Stake was organized in 1947. Brother Harold B. Lee and Charles A. Callis came down to organize it. Brother Lee was my wife's former stake president and he was real close to the Derbyshires. We went over to see him and he needed somebody to type, and he insisted on Virginia doing it.

"After the stake was organized with Alvin Chace as the president, they called me to be stake mission president. At that time I wrote another plan for the stake missionaries to teach by. I will never forget that President Chace and I had quite a ...well, it wasn't exactly an argument, but we just disagreed. They got everybody they could to work in the stake and then anything that was left over that was decrepit they called as a stake missionary. They gave me a handbook that said I didn't have a right to call the missionaries, but as stake mission president I could release them. So it got to the

point they'd call them and I'd release them. I'd go through the list and if they were sick or if they couldn't go out and do missionary work, I'd release them.

"President Chace called me up one day and said, 'What are you doing? Come over to the stake office. I want to talk to you'. So I went over and all three members of the stake presidency were there. I asked what the problem was, and they said, 'You've got the problem!' I asked what it was and they said, 'Releasing stake missionaries, you release them as fast as we call them. We'll never get our quota if you keep releasing them.' So I said, 'Well don't send me all the invalids and don't give me all the ones that can't do nothing.' They said I couldn't do it. I told them to look in the stake mission handbook and as long as they continued to call them, I'd release them. President Chace still said I couldn't do it. I said, 'Yes, I can.' President Chace said, 'Well, we don't want you to do it, so we'll release you as stake mission president.' I said, 'That's your prerogative. I'll quit releasing them, but I'm going to tell you one thing. When the General Authorities come and ask me why I've got so many stake missionaries and no baptisms per missionary, why the report is so bad, I'm going to tell them, 'President Alvin C. Chace told me that I couldn't release them and that I'd better not release them, so we could keep our quota up, so that when we were visited by you brethren that we'd have the quota that we needed for stake missionaries.' He said, 'Wilford, you wouldn't dare.' I said, 'Oh yes I will, President. You watch me.'

"So sure enough when a General Authority came, and we had them every three months then, he interviewed me and wanted to know what the problem was and I told him exactly what I had told President Chace. He went to see President Chace and told him 'President Jordan is right. We don't want missionaries of that caliber. We want someone that is going to do something.' President Chace told him he needed everybody else for the stake, but the General Authority said, 'Well, then you're going to have to baptize some new people or do something.'

"I found out everybody that we baptized was a good stake missionary and were really more on fire than those who had been in the Church for a while. So I finally got over that with the stake president. I wasn't angry, and neither was he, but he said, 'I'm ashamed of you.' I said, 'Well, I told you what I was going to do, President, and I did it. I'm not going to take the blame for it. I took the monkey off my back and put him right on yours.' He said, 'You sure did.'

"Shortly after that I was released as stake mission president, not for that particular reason, but for other reasons. President Chace told me he wanted me to be a stake missionary and not to do anything but baptize and

go out and preach the gospel. He said he didn't want me responsible for anybody but me and my companion. So in one year, my companion and I baptized fifty-four people.

"It caused a few family problems, but we did it anyway. I was gone just about every night of the week, but I finally realized that missionary work wasn't my most important calling, and that my family came first. An old patriarch told me something one time I never forgot. He said he lost his entire family while being a mission president and so active in the Church. He said, 'Don't let your own family go to hell while you're trying to save somebody else's.'

"I was soon called back as stake mission president. They tried calling me as a bishop's counselor, but the stake wouldn't release me. They said, 'If we take him out of the stake mission, it would probably collapse.'

"But later on they did release me and soon called me back again. Elder Mark E. Petersen set me apart the third time. I had told my wife, 'Well, evidently I'm just not good for anything but a missionary.' And she said, 'Well don't complain. Maybe that's where the Lord wants you to serve.' Then when Elder Mark E. Petersen set me apart, right after he called my name, he said, 'I testify to you that you were foreordained in your pre-existent state to be a missionary. That's your specific calling in the Church.' So that relieved my mind and I never was concerned about it anymore. I think I was called back and forth as a stake mission president or stake missionary about seven times.

"After the Florida Stake, they organized the Jacksonville Florida Stake, Jacksonville West Stake, and Gainesville Florida Stake. Later I moved to Gainesville and was put on the high council and they put me over all the missionary activities of the stake. Even later when they had trouble with the Young Adults, I was asked to serve over the Special Interest group to see if I could get them going. Up to this time I guess I had baptized between five and six hundred people. So after I took the Young Adult calling they had a time with me because I'd go to Jacksonville and baptize people, or I'd go up to Georgia and baptize them. Anyplace people hollered, 'Come here', I'd go teach them the gospel and baptize them. The reason was because the people I'd taught and baptized would find someone, whether it was an aunt, uncle, mother, father brother or sister, and would call me to come wherever they were to teach them the gospel, that's why I was privileged to baptize so many people. It worked from word of mouth.

"At that time I served the high council in Jacksonville, President James R. Christianson said to me, 'Quit being a stake jumper. Your responsibility is in the Gainesville Florida Stake. I hear you're in Georgia and in Jacksonville.

Where are you going next? I don't care how many you baptize or teach but bring them over into our stake.' So I told him I'd repent.

President Christianson went out to BYU and they called Brother Chester Tillman as stake president. He called me to Special Interest. A short time after this calling, President LeGrand Curtis was called as mission president. He sent for me and asked me to bring my wife. He asked me if I'd serve as his first counselor. He said he had seen me walking across the floor at a supper the other night and the Spirit whispered, 'That's the man that you should call for your counselor. That experience was great and I could talk about missionary experiences endlessly because I've had so many, but briefly that's been my church career.

"Everybody that I teach, even those that don't join the Church, I still have them as friends. I let them know that I love them and that I appreciate them and that I want to be their friend. This is the first thing you've got to do, let people know that you love them. You've got to break down any animosity or ill feeling, gain their confidence in you, and then bear your testimony to them.

"I would have moved West after my second child was born. My father-in-law kept saying he'd get me a job that I would really like, since he was superintendent of the Utah Power and Light Company and I always wanted to get into the electrical end of it. He made the arrangements and promised me a job when I got there, so we made arrangements to dispose of all of our furniture so we could go West. We had everything arranged, then lo and behold, the mission president Heber Meeks, got wind of it and got in touch with the stake president, who got in touch with me. He called me over to the chapel and got to the point real quick. As I explained it to him, he said, 'Well, let me tell you something, the Lord doesn't want you in the West and neither does the Church'. I said, 'What?' He said, 'Neither the Lord nor the Church wants you in the West, I'm not telling you you can't go, but I'm telling you don't go. I promise you if you won't go, if you'll stay here that you will be blessed with a better job and better opportunities than you ever would if you went West.

"Well, I had quit my job at that time, but he told me, 'Don't go. That isn't where the Lord wants you.'

"When I went home and told my wife, she said, 'I didn't think at the time we were going.' So I've always been in the South, and always will be".

For more than 34 years, Wilford was successfully employed with the Jacksonville Terminal Company. And his work in the Church was ever on-going. Commenting on the Church, he once said the following.

"The thing that has really helped the Church is education. The South had been so uneducated, scholasti-



cally, that's been a disadvantage to us. In my mission you seldom found people that had a high school education, and there were many that could not read or write. Today many of your youth have gone West to school and attended BYU. Because of personal travel and intercommunication, the news media, television shows, it has really helped a lot here. Gainesville is filled with Mormon professors, maybe 20-25 of them. I think the Church will really grow annually because of the accomplishments of the people. And some very respectable families are joining the Church, some of the higher cultured people

"The lack of fellowship is really hurting us. The lack of fellowshipping before and after baptism, and the lack of friendliness of the people.

"I'm grateful to be a member of the Church and I know it's true, and I know that as long as you follow the counsel of those that preside over you, you're going to be all right."

Wilford Jordan lost count of the many baptisms he performed, but it is safe to say he has touched many lives for good in some way in every branch and ward throughout the north Florida and south Georgia area.

His death in 1985 stunned and deeply saddened Latter-day Saints. The man that they considered their loyal friend, confidant, and teacher, died doing something he often enjoyed doing for the sport. As a great outdoorsman he loved to hunt and fish. He taught those

that accompanied him that they should not kill anything they didn't intend to eat. He often hunted, cooked, and ate rattlesnakes, a species he respected. The seven-foot rattler that stilled his life bit him between the index finger and thumb. Wilford and his children had spent many outdoor hours together studying the habits of all God's creatures. He often said, 'I have taught the children not to be afraid of them, but to respect them'. Wilford often took other youngsters hunting whose parents didn't care for the sport. He was always willing to teach a youngster how to appreciate outdoor life.

But on this fateful day, Wilford had already killed, skinned and dressed one rattler when he whacked off the head of the second giant reptile and proceeded to skin and dress it for cooking. In a freak quirk the serpent's severed head reflexed and shot venom through the bite and into Wilford's body. He was semiconscious and unable to speak when paramedics reached his rural Oak Grove home. This great and much-loved faithful and loyal servant of the Lord died in Shands Hospital in Gainesville, on October 22, 1985. More than 500 people sat in the chapel, packed the foyer and cultural hall, while countless others gathered beneath the towering old oaks surrounding the chapel, to attend his funeral service.

Wilford and Jenny Jordan were the parents of four children: Sons: Wilford D. 'Wil' Jordan, and Danny Jordan, Daughters: Annette and Joy.

His wife Jenny followed him in death. Both are buried in Oak Grove Cemetery, near Lake Butler, with many other pioneers of the Church.



*Virginia Derbyshire and Wilford Watts Jordan*





## *FELLOW SOLDIERS OF THE EARTH*

*(While on his way to Carthage Jail,  
Joseph Smith's captors stopped to rest.  
When a curious crowd of people gathered to see him,  
Joseph took advantage and address them in words expressed in this poem.)*

*A silence fell on Nauvoo that day  
When Joseph left to go away  
Dazed by sorrow, he said good-bye  
And told the Saints they must not cry!  
"Fellow soldiers of the earth  
You are of a royal birth  
Sent by God to take a stand  
Teaching others of God's Plan.  
Every color, creed, and race  
Knew our Savior face to face  
Lest they forget, remind them still  
They should do our Father's will-  
Fellow soldiers of the earth  
Share the plan and its great worth  
Teach of prophets old and new  
All their words are meant for you  
I may not pass this way again  
But I will always be your friend  
If I should die then it shall be  
That God has chosen to set me free!"*

*La Viece M. Smallwood*







*Nellie Hill Maddock,  
first woman Missionary from Jacksonville*

# NELLIE HILL MADDOCK

Baker and Duval Counties

Written and submitted by Lawrence Maddock  
of Pensacola, Florida

Nellie Hill Maddock was the first lady missionary called from Jacksonville, Florida. She also served over the years as teacher, chorister, choir director, and soloist.

The twelfth of thirteen children of Thaddeus and Margaret Greene Hill, Nellie was born in 1894 in Sanderson, Florida. Since her parents were converted to Mormonism and baptized in 1897, she was reared in the Church, first in Sanderson, then in Jacksonville. The Hill family originally moved to Jacksonville around 1902, but after Nellie and her brother Frank became sick with typhoid fever, a disease common in Jacksonville at that time, they returned to the country until 1905, when they moved permanently to the city.

Nellie Maddock and her sisters, Edna Grindstaff and Janie Wigg, remembered the beginnings of the Church in Jacksonville. As they told the story, traveling Elders held the first meetings in east Jacksonville. Soon, however, services were being held in the newer Lackawanna-Riverside area. Without a chapel, the missionaries preached and taught Sunday School in private homes. The Hills along with others acted as hosts. The John Sellers family, who were non-members, regularly opened their fine large house. Some of the earliest converts were Brother and Sister Adams and their daughters, (Sister Curtis and Sister Georgia Cordel), Brother and Sister Ashley, and Sister Colby.

Soon a small frame church with a steeple was built on the corner of Short and Claude Streets, a block off Highway (now Edison) Avenue, in a working-class neighborhood. Before an adjacent mission home was built for their housing, the travelling Elders lived with the Hill family in a large house on Highway Avenue. Elders Delker, Woods, Peacock, King, Hancock, and Moore were among those who stayed in the Hill home. Early conference presidents whom the Hill sisters remembered with particular regard included Elders Callis, Hyde (son of the famous Orson Hyde), and Whitaker (who returned in the 30's as president of the Southern States Mission). All of the conference presidents served in the mission field with their wives and children. Charles A. Callis, a self-taught attorney with an impressive personality and preaching style, was an important shaping influence on the early Church in Jacksonville. And perhaps Jacksonville influenced him as he went on to serve for many years as president of the Southern States Mission and finally as a member of the Council of the Twelve.

The Hill sisters recalled that Sunday School in the

new church consisted of two classes, one for adults taught by President Callis, one for children taught by Sister Callis. When the Church began to grow, the Book of Mormon class was added for teenagers.

Although the Western missionaries originally assumed full responsibility for church activities, growth in numbers led to the local members assuming leadership roles. Georgia Cordel served as first local president of the Relief Society, Jasper Croft, as first superintendent of the Sunday School. Brother Croft was a devout Latter-day Saint who took his calling very seriously. Each Saturday he regularly rode his bicycle to every member's house to inquire if he or she was planning to attend 'Sabbath School.' Members found it difficult to decline his invitation. A.O. Jenkins served a first local branch president.

Inevitably, tension sometimes developed between the Western missionaries and the Southern converts. Sister Callis was later greatly loved, but shortly after her arrival, one sister circulated a petition calling for her and the Callis children to return to Utah. Another time, when Elder Hyde thoughtlessly remarked to the congregation that he had come to teach them to read and write, Sister Colby, a literate Southerner who felt no need for his pedagogical services, instantly reacted with, "And to smoke your Daddy's pipe. If I had a rotten egg, I'd throw it between your eyes." One hopes that the Elder, who was a gentle person, did not hear the whispered comment. In spite of understandable personality clashes, a long list of missionaries to Jacksonville were received as teachers of the gospel.

Another recollection of the Hill sisters was of an elderly black man, a member of the Church, who always sat in the back of the church during conferences.

Meanwhile, Nellie Hill was growing up in an environment dominated by Mormon missionary work. In 1913, President Callis interviewed her and called her to serve in the Southern States Mission. Her letter of appointment is dated January 12, 1914. Melissa Mayo of Tampa had received a letter of appointment a few weeks earlier. The two Southerners served first in Atlanta, then in Chattanooga (for that time, the mission headquarters).

To her dismay, the first door on which Sister Hill knocked as a missionary was answered by a distinguished gentleman who quietly informed her that he was a minister and had often lectured on the Mormons. Although slightly discombobulated, the naive young missionary managed to survive her brief conversation with the sectarian preacher.

Nellie Hill returned from her missionary labors to work in the Church and to continue her study of voice. In 1916, she went to the Salt Lake Temple to receive her





***Elder Pond at left, with Nellie Hill from Jacksonville, Florida while serving her mission in 1918.***

endowments and in 1918, President Callis again called her to serve in the mission. During her second mission, she met Elder Lawrence J. Maddock, a pianist from Utah.

Following her release, she corresponded with the Elder. She also met him at the general conferences she regularly attended in Salt Lake City. They were married in April, 1922, in the Salt Lake Temple.

After living in Ogden for a short time, Nellie and Lawrence Maddock moved to Jacksonville. Nellie Maddock continued to be active in the church constructed on Park Street in 1925. The mother of three children, she died in 1981.

## LAWRENCE J. MADDOCK

Lawrence J. Maddock served the Church in Jacksonville for many years as musician, teacher, and officer. Born in 1896, in Ogden, Utah, he was a fourth-generation Mormon. Both his father's and his mother's family were converted in England in the 1840's and both families followed the Church's call for the Saints to gather in Zion. His father, his father's mother, grandmother, and other relatives walked across the plains with the John

Taylor Company in 1860. His mother with her family arrived later on the newly-built railroad.

Both his father and his grandfather had been musicians, and Lawrence followed in their footsteps by studying piano. He was playing for church meetings at the age of twelve. When, as a young man, he was planning to go on the stage as a pianist, he was called to serve in the Southern States Mission. Although he chose the Church over show business, he still performed as a musician in the mission field. He even carried a small folding organ for street meetings, (or other appropriate occasions). The resonant organ sounds attracted listeners for the gospel message.

During his service, Elder Maddock met Nellie Hill, a missionary from Jacksonville. He thought that the Southern lady, who was a soloist, sang well.

Even though he never became accustomed to Southern food, Elder Maddock considered his mission to be one of the more rewarding experiences of his life.

Following his release, he returned to Utah to teach piano and to perform with the Nylander Quartet. In addition, he organized several musical programs which toured among the stakes in Utah. While still in his twenties, he was ordained a seventy. (He was later the first seventy in Jacksonville.)

In 1922, he was married to Nellie Hill. Around 1924, the Maddocks moved to Jacksonville, where over the years Brother Maddock held a variety of church offices. During the 20's and 30's, for example, he served as a superintendent of Sunday School and as president of the young Men's Mutual Improvement Association.

As president of the MIA, L.J. Maddock introduced ballroom dancing to Jacksonville. Saints in the West had always danced, but some of the conservative Southern brethren objected to dancing in the church, even in the recreational hall. As one brother put it, he had never heard of anyone dancing his way into heaven. Dances were finally permitted; however, some members had never learned how to dance. Brother Maddock, though hardly an accomplished ballroom dancer himself, proceeded to give class instruction in the waltz and the fox trot. Somehow, dancing caught on in Jacksonville.

Also, as president of the MIA, he brought in professional musicians to perform. Once he invited a physician to lecture on health. Once he invited the mayor to speak. (A mayor may not have accepted a Mormon invitation in earlier years.)

In 1934, L.J. Maddock arranged the first radio broadcast of a Mormon Church service in Florida. Charles A. Callis, president of the Southern States Mission, brought Melvin J. Ballard of the Council of the Twelve to Jacksonville to deliver the sermon. L.J. Maddock was given responsibility for the broadcasts

and arranged each program. He also acted as organist. The broadcasts continued until 1946.

L.J. Maddock was the first musical director appointed for the Florida Stake. He continued for many years as pianist and organist. Musician, salesman, entrepreneur, he died in 1978. He was the father of three children.

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*I have been a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since September 15, 1893. Myself and family have often had occasion to call for the Elders in the event of sickness which in every case has resulted in the recovery of the afflicted. Every one of my household above eight years of age belongs to the Church. I have seen the Spirit of the Lord made manifest in a number of ways. I have a strong testimony of the truth of the gospel as restored through the agency of the great modern prophet, Joseph Smith. I also know his successors even down to our present beloved Seer were true prophets. When our Father shall call the latter to a mission in the spirit world, He will then endow another to lead us. I wish to say to all that have a testimony, let us ever pray that our Father will remembers our leaders.*

*W. Hampton  
Mago, Florida*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, Sept. 5, 1908*

*I am a little 'Mormon' girl almost 13 years old, and I am pleased to bear my testimony to the truth of the gospel. I believe Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God and that the Book of Mormon is the word of God.*

*Carrie D. Tucker.*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, Aug. 22, 1908*

*I believe this is the true Church of Christ and the straight and narrow path. I believe Joseph Smith was a true prophet of the living God. I have felt happier ever since I joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.*

*Ervin Hill*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, Aug. 22, 1908*

*I feel that I must bear my testimony to the truth of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as taught by the Latter-day Saints. I know without a doubt that it is true. I only wish others could see as I do. I know Joseph Smith was a true prophet and that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, the same as I believe the Bible to be.*

*Mrs. Marcella Lang*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, Aug. 22, 1908*

*I know of a surety that the gospel taught by the Latter-day Saints is the true one and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet. The Book of Mormon is divine, and the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price are as sacred as the Bible. I am thankful that I live now when the fullness of precious gospel is with us.*

*Jossie E. Mellin*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, Sept. 5, 1908*

*I believe that the gospel taught by the humble 'Mormon' Elders is genuine, and also that the Book of Mormon is true. Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Almighty. I have been a member of the true Church of Jesus Christ for ten years and have had my prayers answered.*

*Lemuel F. Hill*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, Sept. 5, 1908*



*With pleasure I bear my testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon, and the wonderful latter-day work, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I feel that God has blessed me with a testimony that it is true, and that I have been visited by the power of the Holy Ghost which has verified these things to me.*

*Mrs. C.E. Carroll*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, Sept. 5, 1908*

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## OH WALK WITH ME

*Oh walk with me, in Harmony  
In Hiram, Kirkland too  
Meditate and contemplate  
Old prophecies and new.  
Oh walk with me in Old Nauvoo  
Take me by the hand  
Let's speak of things that happened  
In this sacred land  
Oh, God our Eternal Father  
Let Thy Spirit please abide  
As we walk along the way  
Stay close and near our side  
Cast Thy Spirit on us now  
As we seek to know  
Reveal to us the sacred things  
Help our spirits grow.  
Help us to do Thy will  
On our sacred paths  
We seek to know eternal things  
That in our hearts will last  
In sacred groves and temples old  
Thy presence hath there dwelled  
And revealed to man  
Thy glorious plan  
Oh how our hearts doth swell!  
We'll sing of Thee and Thy great work  
Of prophets old and new  
Help us to understand Thy will  
As we journey through.*

*La Viece M. Smallwood*



## E. COLEMAN MADSEN

July 29, 1917-March 20, 1983

Elmer Coleman Madsen, known as Coley to his family and friends, was a Westerner by heart, and after a mission in the South, became a Southerner by transplant. Most of all, he was a devoted servant of God who used his talents and abilities to build up the Church in the South. An attorney of unquestionable integrity by profession, he aided prophets, general authorities, and local leadership when called on for assistance. A man of great stature, his faithful work for the Church is evidence in a 1981 meeting with David F. Boone, a member of the Religious Instruction Support Services staff at Brigham Young University whose interview was done under the James Moyle Oral History Trust Fund grant. Additional information has been obtained through Brother Madsen's wife, Marion, and his children.

Elder Coley Madsen was 21 years-old when he left Utah to serve a mission in the South. The year was 1938 and the country was just emerging from the great Depression. Life for him in the southern states was anticipated to be different than other locations where he could have served. His family felt reason for concern. Born in Midway, Wasatch County, Utah, on July 29, 1917, to Clarence Elmer Madsen and Merle Coleman Madsen, he spent his youth between his family's moves from Midway to Provo where he received the best in education. His Midway home, still standing today, has been the center of attraction for many Church movies produced by Brigham Young University. His one brother, Philip, was killed by an accidental gunshot wound when he was fifteen, and his one sister, Rhea Jean, died in 1978.

The southern people were, for the most part uneducated and poor, many living in primitive conditions, especially in rural areas. That, however, was not his concern, nor that of his family and friends. Missionaries serving in the South were often subjected to persecutions, hostilities, and prejudices. There had even been the fatal shooting of Elder Joseph Standing in South Carolina and the ambush of George Paul Canova, Florida's first martyr for the Church. Southern missionaries were constantly being threatened, whipped, and run out of sections where they served.

At the time of his arrival in the South, the Southern States Mission covered five southern states. He served two years in Florida, Alabama and Georgia. For Coley Madsen, his life's mission would be in the South. He came to love and respect the southern people and once said, "I really believe that with the lack of information,

the lack of education, the lack of sophistication in these people, they had to rely on the Lord, and the Lord didn't let them down." Their faith, he even said, was greater than his counterparts in Utah.

Commenting further on the southern environment, he once said, "It was easy to see why education was not stressed in the boondocks at that time. There was no electricity outside of the cities. When I was working in Lake City, we used to go to a little place called Deep Creek, which is only about fifteen miles from Lake City, and there was no electricity of any kind. This was in 1938. We had lamps, we had fireplaces, and wood stoves, and that's the way people kept warm and were able to see. We'd hold meetings in the school house by the light of a kerosene lamp, which you'd have to hold in one hand and hold the scriptures in the other. There were no radios unless you were fortunate enough to have a battery set. Therefore, people in rural areas weren't able to keep in touch with people.

"I really believe and relate to this, because those (southern) people had such simple faith that they were able to get the desires of their hearts," he once commented. "Some-times in the cities people were a little more sophisticated. They could go to a doctor or to a hospital. They didn't have these experiences.

"There was no way you could just walk around the corner to a drugstore. There was no way you could just go see a doctor," he said. "It was quite an experience just to get to the nearest town and almost impossible to make appointments for any need you might have. In addition, the rural people had very little, if any, money."

Marion Linden Hinson was only 15 years old when Elder Madsen began serving his mission in Jacksonville from September until November.

"We had no romantic connections or associations," he was quick to say. "As a matter of fact I only saw her a few times before I was transferred to Lake City, Florida, then Alabama, and Georgia. I really became acquainted with Marion after my mission when she came to Utah to visit. We went out together, but it was nothing serious."

Marion had been a recent convert when they first became acquainted. Both she and her parents joined the Church due to the missionary efforts. Her mother, also named Marion, has a record for bringing about 100 people into the Church since her conversion.

Two years after Marion's visit to Utah the couple began to correspond and that resulted in Elder Madsen reaching the conclusion she was the one he wanted to spend eternity. The couple married in the Salt Lake Temple, January 22, 1942. Shortly thereafter he enlisted as an aviation cadet in what was then the U.S. Army Air Corps, and began flight training in Santa Ana, California. The first of their seven children, David H. Madsen was



born in Jacksonville where Marion had gone to be near her family. Before he left to go overseas to his assigned base in Italy, the second son, Michael Madsen arrived. So that Marion could be near her mother while her husband was serving his country, the couple moved to Jacksonville. His active tour of duty, which included flying fifty missions over occupied Europe, merited him the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After his discharge from the military, Elder Madsen moved his family to Utah where he attended BYU and the University of Utah. Deciding he wanted to attend law school, he returned to the South. As fate would have it, he was in Jacksonville, Florida, when the first stake in the South was organized and named the new first counselor in the newly organized stake presidency led by Alvin Chace. Jack Lindsay was the second counselor. Upon his release a year-and-a-half later, he returned to the UOU to finish his education and graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1950. While there he served as the bishop of the Airport Ward in the Riverside Stake.

Although Elder Madsen's experiences as a southern missionary was a factor in his return to the South, it was not the primary reason. "I knew that the opportunity for service would be good here," he said. "Another reason considered he said was that his wife's parents were in Jacksonville, and her father was ill and an invalid. A primary reason is that he was closely associated in his early days with Henry D. Moyle and Bishop Joseph Wirthlin who are the brethren who came South originally to purchase the land that the Church ranch now occupies.

"Elder Moyle said to me one day, 'When you get out of school, I don't think you ought to go to law school here. I think you should go to Florida.'"

Brother Moyle also advised him to go to law school adding, "When you get out we need somebody down there to help us on the ranch, legally."

Elder Madsen returned to Jacksonville in 1950 with his family and enrolled in the University of Florida law school, graduating with a Bachelor of Laws degree, later presented to him as a Doctorate of Jurisprudence degree. His son David remembered that his father was in law school with four children, working a full-time job in a paint store and doing his church assignments.

"The people at the law school told him he'd never make it through law school, but he graduated with honors, in the top of his class," he said.

Along with his law school studies, Elder Madsen began working for the ranch part time.

"I was assigned to take inventories of the machinery and other things, and from then until 1974, I was closely associated with the ranch," he said.

He was called to be the bishop of the Jacksonville

Second Ward. In 1954 he was appointed professionally an assistant to the United States Attorney in Jacksonville. Later he was transferred to Miami which was the district headquarters for the Southern District of Florida. He now was appointed to serve as the Chief Assistant United States Attorney. Later, as his career escalated, he was appointed as the first full-time bankruptcy judge for the United States court in Florida.

"I served there until a vacancy occurred in the United States Attorney's office. Then I was appointed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to serve as the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida."

Those appointments did not affect his Church work. In fact, he said, they helped it.

"I hear a lot of people say, 'Oh well, I was in this position and that position and couldn't do anything,' but all the time I served as Assistant U S Attorney, I was serving as the Bishop of the Jacksonville Second Ward. When I moved to Miami I was put in the district presidency while I was still the Chief Assistant U.S. Attorney. After I was appointed U.S. Attorney, I was appointed a counselor in the stake presidency. So I didn't miss a thing, and didn't have a day off."

Elder Madsen saw benefits for the Church between his professional career and Church association. He served as U.S. Attorney during the Cuban missile crisis. When the U.S. sent troops to Miami there was a lot of publicity.

"Once or twice a week we would meet with the agents of the FBI, the CIA, and the State Department. In any publicity received, the byline would usually refer to me as 'a Mormon Church official, a former Mormon Bishop', or something like that. In an Arizona news clipping, sent to me concerning the Miami Stake organization, reference was made that the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida was a counselor in the Mormon Stake presidency. Sometimes it opened doors for missionary work."

While serving as a counselor in the Miami Stake presidency, he was called to the Church Home Teaching Committee and released from all local assignments. That was in 1963 and the beginning of correlation, he said.

"There were two of us, myself and Robert Sears, who were called to represent the Church in the eastern part of the United States. Bob had the northern part and I had the southern. I'd hold conferences all over the eastern part of the United States. In the early days we had a continuing responsibility to keep up with the stakes as to home teaching, family home evening, and priesthood correlation. Quarterly meetings were held in Salt Lake and I remember that President Marion G. Romney was our committee chairman. My job was to come back and

train the stake presidents and bishops to implement the new home teaching and family home evening programs.

“For ten years I was gone almost every weekend, except for a six-week period in the summertime, on this assignment. The only expenses the Church reimbursed us for was our travel expenses,” he noted.

When Elder Madsen first arrived in Miami, the Church area was called a district organization. Next it was called the Miami Stake, and took in all of South Florida. After being appointed to the Church Home Teaching Committee he traveled to all the Florida stakes. The Jacksonville Stake at that time was known as the Florida Stake. There was a stake in Tampa and Orlando as well.

“We used to go in as members of a general committee and sit with stake presidents and make reports, and if they didn’t measure up we could report that. As a general Church committeeman, Elder Madsen said he could see the wisdom of having representatives serving from areas they were familiar with.

“As I remember there were forty-seven of us throughout the world. I was here in the South and there were others from Texas, Chicago area, and in the North. Sometimes a man from Salt Lake would come down and he knew nothing of the conditions. We knew what we were talking about. I’d been a bishop, served in three stake presidencies, and on the high council. I had first hand knowledge of the problems in my area, and nobody could kid me about what needed to be done or how you could do it, or whether you couldn’t do it. Besides the Home Teaching committee, there were three other committees: Missionary, Genealogy, and Welfare.

“The programs were carried out well in the South because the people are so family oriented,” he noted.

“And too,” he said, “in the South we were few in numbers, and we had to fight and cling together. We didn’t have a majority of people that understood us. That by itself forced us to keep our families together like trying to have our Mormon families marrying into other Mormon families. In other areas, such as Utah, the need wasn’t as great there as it was in the South.”

Elder Madsen served on the general Church Home Teaching Committee from 1963 to 1967 then the program was taken over under the Regional Representative program. After that, he had responsibility for the combination of programs, not just his previous assignment. He served as Regional Representative from 1967 to 1974. There were some problems that came with that he said.

“I think the problem stemmed not from the program but from the regional representative himself. With this little bit of authority now, some would go in and demand too much: ‘Give me a report of this, a report of that, a report of the other.’ With all the reports that the

brethren had to file anyway, three or four extra ones a month caused some concern. Some of the brethren didn’t follow the counsel we received. Brother Lee (Harold B.) always used to say, ‘Now you’re not the quarterback. The stake president is the quarterback. You’re the coach, and you don’t have any business out on the field at all. You sit on the bench, you observe, and then you counsel the quarterback. If you go out on the field and the game is in process, you get penalized.’ He always mentioned that the regional representative was not the stake president and couldn’t be. And some of the brethren were a little over-anxious and they pushed too hard. That’s the only opposition I know that came with the program. But that wasn’t the program; that was the people in it who went too far.”

As a regional representative Elder Madsen assisted in many stake reorganizations.

“We were called ‘regional representatives of the Twelve’ because we didn’t work with anybody but the Twelve,” he said explaining that the role of the regional representative was not to select a stake president, but to testify, verify, and confirm that the man chosen had been chosen the right way.

“I learned through many spiritual experiences that when one of the Twelve goes with that assignment and someone has the assignment to help him, then the Lord gives it to both men. The member of the Twelve makes the selection and the man with him is to bear witness that it was the right choice.”

Since the early 1950’s Elder Madsen associated himself with those who sought to establish a Church ranch in south Florida. He worked especially close with four Church officials, men who he felt had great vision.

“The first people to come down were Bishop Joseph Wirthlin, the Presiding Bishop of the Church, and Henry D. Moyle, an apostle. Later, Delbert L. Stapley who was on the committee and a vice-president,” he said. “I think at first they were looking for speculation, for their own personal interest, but after they saw what was here they got the idea that the Church ought to come in and get in on the ground floor for this property. They had vision to see what this could be. After those three became involved then President David O. McKay supported the idea. They began to buy land and speculate. They bought land dirt cheap, and worked day and night to put it together. In a few years they had purchased over 300,000 acres of land. That’s a lot bigger than Salt Lake and Utah Valley all put together. Then they began to set it up kind of like a Church unit. We had a lot of orange groves, and we planted orange groves. They divided this up into units like wards, and each unit had a foreman, and each foreman had responsibility for his area because one man couldn’t get to all the areas and



supervise them. So we set it up that way. There were millions of feet of lumber on this property, so they started a lumber business. One day President J. Reuben Clark said, "I would question the advisability of cutting any more timber. The production records show that we're not getting anything compared to what we're putting into it." He made a suggestion that his friend, Leo Ellsworth, take a look at it. Leo did and afterwards advised we ought not to cut any more timber. The timber was not old enough to bring good returns. So it was decided that they would go into the cattle business 100 percent and let the timber grow, only selling it along and along like the orange grove part, but the whole thing became a cow-calf operation.

"I think what started out as speculation was just sheer inspiration. Henry Moyle and Joseph Wirthlin had a friend, Heber Meeks down here who told them, 'Look, we can buy land in Central Florida for \$10 an acre,' and it was true, some land you could. They bought a 50,000-acre tract of land that averaged that. They went back to President McKay and said, 'President, this is too much for just two people. The Church ought to come into this thing.' The president agreed. Now I don't know the purpose for this land, but I believe it will mean a big difference one day to the people.

"Once someone made an offer to buy the land and President McKay appointed a committee to study the offer, but after reflection President McKay declined. Gradually through the years they have added parcels increasing it in size."

He remembers some of the problems that was experience in the early days.

"One of our problems was roads. We had a lot of expensive heavy equipment, and the roads were sand and were doing harm to the mechanical parts that have oil and friction. So Henry Moyle assigned me and him the responsibility of getting the State of Florida to take over some of the roads we had for state maintenance. We couldn't do it. It was just impossible.

So we had a campaign. We went to Tallahassee to see the governor, who was Dan McCarty. In ten minutes' time Henry Moyle was the kind of guy that could be in charge and could have control of everything just like he wanted it. So we were talking to Governor McCarty and the governor said, "Mr. Moyle, I know you're a Mormon. I want to show you something." So he reached over in his desk, and he got a Bible and brought it over. He said, "Do you see this Bible? This is the Bible I took the oath of office on. Open it up." So we opened it up. And it was a Bible, King James Version, inscribed, "To Dan McCarty from..." I've forgotten his first name, but his last name was Martel. He said, 'Do you know who he was?' And I said, "I do." He was the branch

president in the little town where McCarty lived. He said, 'I think more of that man than any other man I know, except my father. I took the oath of office on a Mormon Bible.' And so we felt, 'Man, we're in.'

"He agreed that he would get some of these secondary roads under state maintenance. I reminded him that this is not a Church-owned project, that it is a private corporation, a Florida corporation. I told him we pay real estate and cooperate taxes and we do not claim any church exemptions and felt the state ought to help us a little bit.

"Well, Governor McCarty died and LeRoy Collins became governor. He was also very friendly to the Church. Because I had done him a couple of favors while I was U S Attorney when the state of Florida was in big trouble with the federal government over Raiford State Prison I had some ins with him. One time I said to Luther Tucker, a Church member and senator from West Florida, 'Why don't we get Henry Moyle appointed an honorary citizen of Florida?' So we went to see the governor. We went to his inauguration and had special seats with the Supreme Court judges. Afterwards it was put to the legislature and approved 100 percent. The governor signed the certificate and gave it to Henry Moyle making him an honorary citizen of the state of Florida.

"Anyway, the roads were fixed, oiled and maintained. We gave a lot of land to build a highway and didn't charge them for it just saying that we wanted progress in this area, and for the state. We told them if they wanted to build the big four-lane expressway, the Beeline highway from Orlando to Cape Kennedy, we'd give them the land to do it. We said what we wanted in return was for them to put the underpasses where we wanted them so we could drive the cattle. We also offered them hundreds of acres of land for a university. We cooperated 100 percent and had nothing but cooperation from Florida. We've had governors, senators and other officials come down and hunt on the ranch. We have wild life in abundance."

Elder Madsen said some things have changed in the past few years.

"I think the environmentalists are giving the trouble, and the state kind of backs away because they're afraid of the environmentalists who lobby."

To his knowledge there has never been a movement in the development of the ranch to obtain an exemption on taxes. The vast land expanse lays in a number of different counties, but to his knowledge there has never been any trouble with county commissioners or other officials. The ranch has no mortgages.

Because of his involvement with the ranch, he became acquainted with many Church officials.

"I met quarterly with President McKay for years. Henry Moyle and I were almost like a father and son. Delbert Stapley and I traveled together for twenty years as he was in charge of this area. N. Elton Tanner took Henry Moyle's place after Henry died, and became Vice-president of Deseret Ranches. We had great times together. At the same time, the Church owned a big feed lot in Georgia up by Desoto and Albany. Between my church assignment and my ranch assignment and my legal profession, I wasn't home very often.

"When Brother Ezra Taft Benson took over he became the executive vice-president and I became the secretary of the corporation. I got to know these brethren very well. When you sat with President McKay you sat like this, feet to feet, knee to knee, eye to eye, and he would grab your hand. President Harold B. Lee came to the ranch often and he knew all about it when he became President. Delbert Stapley was the most organized and the most administrative of all of them. He was nicknamed 'Mr. Dependable'. He was a great administrator and served as vice-president on the Church ranch committee for twenty years. Henry Moyle was also an organizer and I've never met a man with his vigor and as smart a business mind. He was a giant."

As time passed the ranch flourished and especially so in 1954 when a wealthy cattleman from Arizona, Leo Ellsworth, took over as manager and at his request of a mere \$1 annual salary. The Ellsworth Ward chapel, located on the ranch, is the only chapel so named for a member. In the years that have followed the ranch's establishment, many general authorities, and Church presidents have visited the ranch. The ranch has been a social gathering place for many non-member dignitaries. Throughout his life, Elder Madsen always felt it a privilege to be a part of the tremendous growth of the ranch.

And how did family life fit into such a busy and productive career and Church responsibilities?

"Well, there's where a good mother and a good wife comes in. I started in 1947 with a family. While overseas I was set apart as a military group leader before I went to Italy, and although I didn't have to call meetings because we had chaplains, I did and from then until my release my family didn't have much of me. Then while in the stake presidency of the old Florida Stake, I had much traveling to do on the committee, and then as the regional representative. I was just never home, hardly ever in my own ward. My boys resented it, but it didn't affect them very much because they were pretty good kids. We've talked a lot about not being able to go fishing, to football games, or other places together while Daddy was not home during those formative years."

Despite the lack of Elder Madsen's presence in the home, the Madsen children sought to excel and live the

high standards of their parents. They scored high on their college qualification tests, Michael placing third in the state and another time, Jon second. All were outstanding students and sought for higher educations, at BYU and others state colleges like Florida State and Duke University.

"Although my children had no problem getting in BYU sometimes we have difficulty getting our kids into there because the local Utah people take all the places. The Church supports Brigham Young University from the tithes of the Church and our people pay their percentage of tithing the same as anybody else. I think BYU could be more effective and more helpful to us if they'd let us in more often. I wanted my children to go there for the atmosphere and to get the Church programs, institutional programs connected with the college, things you can't find down here anywhere, except Gainesville.

"We tried to maintain friends in the Church so the children didn't have all outside influence. Our children have been active in Church sports and road shows and other activities the Church offered, but they have been equally as active in school activities. They've been to statewide competition in debate. I was in the Air Force and everyone I knew respected my standards. My only temptation came when I got off my mission and two church members tried to get me to drink some beer. It's important to have people around who are good associates and good influences and you just have to see to that both in and out of the Church."

Elder Madsen has seen the reputation of the Church change from its days of persecution.

"I think it has an excellent reputation now. Wherever you go the Church creates a feeling of respect and admiration. Only a few people feel otherwise. Today we enjoy the nationwide publicity the Church has such as the broadcasts of conference. We also have many of our people in management positions, professional people."

The seven Madsen children ascended to the stature of their father's anticipations. David filled a mission in the Franco-Belgian Mission and graduated from BYU, later attending Duke University graduating with a PHD. He is presently with the Church Educational System in SLC writing text books for the curriculum department of the education system. Michael served a mission in Japan, attended BYU and owned his own business in California. He is presently liaison officer and interpreter for a large international computer company headquartered in Chino, Japan where he lives. Stephen Richard served a mission in the New England States Mission, graduated from BYU law school and is now an attorney in SLC. Jon Christen lived for a while in Hawaii managing Colony Hotels. He presently resides



in Bend, Oregon, where he is in the restaurant business. Henry lives in Jacksonville and suffers a disability from a gun shot wound in the eye that went up into his skull and is still there. He is presently a Tug Boat Captain. Mark, lives at Jacksonville Beach and is in construction business. His only daughter, Mary Kathleene 'Trinka', is a professional ballet dancer. She is a graduate of Jacksonville University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. The Madsens' have 15 grandchildren.

Five days following his untimely death on March 20, 1983, Marion Madsen received a letter from the First Presidency: Spencer Kimball, Marion Romney and Gordon B. Hinckley. It read:

Dear Sister Madsen,

It is with sadness that we offer condolences on the death of E. Coleman Madsen, your beloved husband and our esteemed friend and co-worker.

We acknowledge Brother Madsen's contributions to our country as decorated pilot, to community, to his profession, as outstanding husband and father, and to the Church in many leadership positions culminating in service as a Regional Representative.

Brother Madsen was a prime example of a good and great individual who contributed willingly and ably to the welfare of us all.

We recognize that Brother Madsen could not have accomplished so much if he had not enjoyed the love and support of a remarkable family. We commend you, your fine daughter, and sons.

May our Father in Heaven comfort you at this challenging time. May the calm, sweet assurance of eternal life with your noble companion rest upon you.

Sincerely yours,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

Six months before his death he visited his beloved West and upon returning home wrote this poignant eulogy.

"The smells of the hills and sage come back to me, as they always will come. I see the veils, like purple smoke, in the canyons of the Wasatch. I feel the majestic silence of the forests of silver spruce and aspen of the Uintas. I see the beauty of the sego lily, columbine, and Indian paintbrush. I see the red-winged hawk as it soars over the ridges of the valley. I see the blue shimmer of Strawberry Lake. I hear again the 'hoot' of the cowboys in Indian Valley, the bleating of sheep in Little Coop Meadow. I see the glory of the Creator expressed in the colors of autumn in Dutch Hollow and Snake Creek Canyon. It seems that again I am on the trails of Timpanogos, the Great White Throne, Zion and Bryce Canyons, and the Mesa Verde. The winters of six-foot snows in Strawberry Valley. Fifteen summers in a tent

amongst the sage and aspen, with Dad and Mother, Phil and Rhea Jean. Experiences with real pards that other men just dream about. My body shall return to the earth and become again a part of it. My blood will be seen in the red of the Indian paintbrush. My eyes will be found in the blue of the columbine on the slopes of Timpanogos. My spirit will be in the sky, but will be visible in the white and gold of the sego lily. My voice will be heard in the wind, whispering in the pines.

I think I am what is called 'homesick' for the hills of home."

E. Coleman Madsen

## MARION HINSON MADSEN

Jacksonville, Florida



*Marion Madsen, wife of the late E. Coleman Madsen, speaking at the 50th Anniversary of the Florida Stake Organization.*

It was a very cold day in February of 1936 when Elders Wilford A. Fischer and LeGrand Dunkley, came calling at the Jacksonville home of Arnold A. and Marion L. Slattery Hinson, on Walsh Street in the Avondale area. The Hinson's 12 year-old daughter, Marion, was home alone. Her parents, faithful members of the Riverside Avenue Christian Church, were out on

an errand.

“My parents had told me never to open the door for anyone to enter,” Marion said, “so while I stood at the door, and the Elders stood on the porch, they told me the story of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. They left the Book of Mormon for my folks to read. The missionaries talked so long that a roaring fire in the fireplace had burned down to cold ashes. To this day, though, I still remember their words and the message.

“It was three weeks,” Marion said, “before the Elders returned. Meanwhile my mother had read the Book of Mormon they left, and she believed it to be true even though she didn’t know what Church it was. The Elders were surprised to find my mother ready for baptism when they returned. In those days, people who heard of the gospel usually took six months to a year before they were ready for baptism.

“My mother was baptized in March of 1936. I had not read the Book of Mormon, and therefore did not have the same testimony as that of my mother, so I continued to attend the Riverside Avenue Christian Church. Finally I read the book, and gained a testimony that it was true. I followed Mother in baptism on July 26th of that same year, and my father followed in December.

“The Elders came to our home regularly and we loved to discuss gospel principles and eagerly read all of the Church books and literature they brought with them.

“Our branch president was Thomas Copeland. He and all the members of the branch made us feel so welcome, and we made friends rapidly. I remember my grandmother, Kellie Slattery, saying we loved the church members as much as we did our family. Later on she said we used to go to Salt Lake City like we were just going to town. But we had many spiritual meetings and learned to truly love and appreciate the gospel. Our testimonies were continually strengthened as our knowledge increased.

“In 1942 I married E. Coleman Madsen two years after he had returned from his Southern States mission in Florida, Georgia and Alabama. We were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple by Elder Charles A. Callis and moved to Florida.

“Coley, as we called him, joined the U.S. Air Force due to World War II. He left for training as a pilot from Jacksonville when our first son, David, was three months old. After he graduated as a pilot of the B-17 bomber, he flew 50 missions over Europe in the 15th Air Force from Foggia, Italy. We had another son, Michael, who was 10 days old when Coley left for an overseas tour of combat duty.

“Coley came home safely in 1945.

“When the first Florida Stake was organized January

19, 1947, I was called to serve as second councilor in the Stake Primary. Coleman was the first counselor to the newly called stake president, Alvin C. Chace.

“Later we moved to Salt Lake for Coley to finish his schooling. I served in the ward Relief Society as first counselor to Audrey Zwick, mother of Elder Zwick, who now serves as a member of the Seventy. After moving to Gainesville, Florida, where Coley could finish law school, I served as Primary President in the Gainesville Ward. Then I served as first counselor to the stake Relief Society President, Sister Vella Tilton and later to Sister Vida Bennett.

“Coley had graduated from the University of Utah with a Bachelor of Science degree in International Affairs in 1950. In 1953 he graduated from the University of Florida with a Doctor of Jurisprudence. He was Chief Assistant United States Attorney when, in 1959, we were transferred to Miami, Florida. I had not been released from the Florida Stake Relief Society when I was called to serve in the Miami Branch Relief Society as first counselor. In 1960 the Miami Stake was organized and I served as the first new stake Relief Society president for the next five years. In 1965, I was released when we moved back to Jacksonville. By this time, our family consisted of six sons and one daughter. In 1946 I had dreamed I would have seven children. Years passed and I forgot the dream, but when our seventh child arrived our son Michael, who had remembered me sharing the incident of the dream, reminded me I had told him the story of the dream many years before.

“Our goal in life was to strive to live up to the standards of the Church, and to serve faithfully and exhibit the love of the Lord. Through these paths and Church positions, Coleman and I have been blessed to enjoy the close associations of many church presidents like David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson and many other of our dear General Authorities. Elders Henry D. Moyle and Delbert L. Stapley were our close, personal friends.

Despite adversities that naturally come into our lives, life has been a sweet and rewarding journey for me. I am very thankful the Lord chose me and my family to have the gospel in our lives. Many sacred blessings, and bounteous testimony-building experiences have hallowed my life, and I am very grateful.



*Church of Jesus Christ of Later-Day Saints*

*Southern States Mission*

*Atlanta, Georgia*

May 8, 1922.

Dear Brethren and Sisters:

We need all the encouragement and strength we can get to battle with the difficulties of life. The examples of great and favored men of the Lord build us up.

If your way appears to be hedged in, and your pathway hemmed in with difficulties, read the answer the faithful Nephi made to his father, when his father told him of the Lord's commandment that he (Nephi) and his brethren were to return to Jerusalem and secure the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass. Nephi thus answered his father:

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father, I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.

"And it came to pass that when my father had heard these words, he was exceeding glad, for he knew that I had been blessed of the Lord."

-- 1 Nephi 3:7,8.

This example encourages us, dear brethren and sisters. We can live our religion, have family and private prayers, keep the Word of Wisdom, pay our tithing, for the Lord will prepare the way for us to do these things. Happy are we if we keep the commandments of God without murmuring. The Lord bless you.

Your brother in the Gospel

*Chas. A. Callis.*

CAC:C

*I enjoyed reading your letter, dear Bro. Blackwelder*

# IMOGENE NETTLES SMITH

*The following story was taken from a family history book by Imogene Nettles (Mrs. Felton) Smith of Lake Butler, Florida, and edited for brevity. Imogene is the descendant of the Nettles family of Union/Bradford counties who were a moving force among the early LDS Saints of Florida especially in the Oak Grove section. Her book actually begins two centuries before the first Nettles of her direct line would wend their way to Florida. Her publication is filled with descriptive photographs and wonderful stories that penetrate deeply into her legacy, one she has taken the time to capture for the family she loves and respects.*

John Jackson Nettles I was born in Liberty County, Georgia, on December 18, 1823. He married Martha Jane Miller from Coffee County, Georgia, in 1851 and the couple became the parents of nine children: William, Lydia, Lucretia, Nancy, John Jackson II, Celia Elisabeth, Martha Jane, Martin Henry and Joseph Glenn. After John served in the Civil War, the couple came to Florida moving several times in and around Columbia, Aker, and Bradford Counties, but finally settling in Union County. After 52 years of marriage they died four months apart in 1904 and are buried in New Zion Cemetery in Union County.

John Jackson Nettles II was born August 14, 1861, while his parents were living in Appling County, Ga. He married Melvina Missouri Keene Aug 6, 1882, when she was living north of Lake City, Florida, with her parents John Jefferson Keene and Sarah Elisabeth Caroline Brill. They married Aug 7, 1867, and settled on the northeast edge of Ocean Pond where he farmed. Like his parents before him, John moved around from neighboring county to county until he settled in Union County. He and Melvina were the parents of 11 children: John Jackson III, Janey Elisabeth, William Henry, Louis Edgar, Fredrick Alexander, Lucretia, Nancy Matilda, Rosa Mae, Linnie Pearl, Mary Leona, and Nellie Missouri. Times were hard and cash hard to come by during his life time and while he struggled to make a living for his family he was in an accident with a horse and buggy that resulted in the loss of his leg. It is remembered that two doctors came to the home to amputate his leg. Imogene wrote, "They took the kitchen door off the hinges and laid it across saw horses on barrels and two neighboring farmers administered the ether under the doctor's directions while the operation took place," she wrote. He wore a wooden leg throughout the remainder of his life but was remembered as a man of strong courage and faith. On Feb 2, 1930, Jackson, as he was called, suffered a heart attack in his

home and died. His wife lived on until 1933.

John Jackson Nettles III was born Aug 16, 1883, in Columbia County, Florida. He married Lonice Valeria Clemons Dec 30, 1908, in Branford, Florida. She was born Sept 16, 1893. The couple settled down in Union County (then Bradford) where he purchased some farming land from his father, and he and Lonice became the parents of 13 children: Maude Valeria, Myrtice Ivera, Thelma Elisabeth, John Wilbur, Sally Beatrice, Rosa Ethel, Mary Catherine, Fredrick Ellis, Marjorie Eloise, Archie Glenn, John Maines, Jessie Imogene, and Gloria Jacquelyn.

About 1930 John went into the butchering business, delivering sausage and meat to stores from Union county to Jacksonville. While working in road construction in Union County in November he contracted a cold from working in water while repairing a bridge. It turned into pneumonia causing his death Nov 11, 1935. Lonice continued the meat business several years to support eight children at home. Imogene remembers her mother as 'unselfish, giving, and uncomplaining in all she did for her family.

Imogene's father, John Jackson Nettles III was 14 years old when he heard the gospel preached by two missionaries that were tracting near his home in 1896. He went home and told his parents, John Jackson and Melvina Keene Nettles that he believed that what they were preaching was true and that he was going to join the Mormon Church. His baptism on July 4, 1897 was the beginning of the Nettles family membership in the Church. His parents followed him in baptism the following year.

Imogene writes that in those years the few Saints who could attend regular meetings were meeting in New Zion schoolhouse just off 241 south between Lulu and Providence. The old building was located on the west side of the road and was where Oak Grove Branch was organized in 1898. John Murphy was the presiding priest of the congregation. It would be several years before anyone would be set apart to hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. Sometime after this organization, the leaders of the school district refused to allow the Mormons to use the schoolhouse any longer. That is when the Saints built their own church and today it is where the present Oak Grove Chapel stands in Providence.

The Nettles owned a 40 acre farm adjoining the chapel site and cemetery. Her grandfather Nettles' farm was adjacent to theirs and several relatives lived in the vicinity. The Nettles' home was located approximately 400 yards from the church and the children caught the school bus up the lane in the church yard.

Imogene writes, "The church was built between



1900-1910. The members were not prosperous. They started meeting on the grounds in a brush arbor with planks placed on sawed blocks for benches."

The faithful members farmed and were employed in various other vocations while they diligently gave of their substance and sacrifice much to complete the building.

Her mother joined the Church in 1915, and when her father died in 1935 the youngest child was only 18 months old. Imogene was three-and-one-half. She remembers her mother's faithfulness to the Church while rearing eight children by herself.

"I played under and around the quilts that my mother and other sisters quilted at Oak Grove Relief Society."

She especially remembers Pioneer Day celebrations and box suppers that helped to raise money for the budget.

"My mother would see that all of us girls, as well as she, had box lunches that were well filled with goodies and beautifully decorated with crepe paper flowers. The boxes were sold to the highest bidders (who didn't necessarily know whose box it was) and the buyer had the privilege of eating with the owner of the box. The young men of courting age just seemed to always find out which box belonged to which girl, so they could bid on it and eat supper with a special young lady. That was when the bidding really got to going good. I remember some boxes went as high as \$4 and \$5 which was a lot of money in those days. The money was being raised for the Church so it was going for a worthy cause and no one counted the cost. I once asked my mother, who was a widow woman with very limited means, why she prepared the meal and then had to buy it back before it could be eaten. She said something I've never forgotten, 'Imogene, always remember all you give to the Church and the work of the Lord you will never miss, and you will be greatly blessed.'"

She remembers one particular Pioneer Day when her mother and 16 year-old brother John made a covered wagon top for their farm wagon. James R. Boone, the new Stake Patriarch, and former Florida District President, had prepared a simulated trek of the Saints' journey west. As many as desired were welcome to accompany President Boone on this trek with John driving the covered wagon. They stopped at designated places along the way that represented the places the Saints had stopped on their journey west.

"It was a memorable occasion for all who was present, as Bro. Boone would relate the experiences of the original Saints as they traveled west. That was in 1947 when we were celebrating the Saints 100th year arrival in the great Salt Lake Valley," she said.

"Each year the 'Picnic', or 24th of July Pioneer Day

celebration, was about the biggest day of the year," she explained. "Everyone looked forward to it with great anticipation from one year to the next. It was a time to play games, have races, and get reacquainted with people we had not seen for a year. There was always a new outfit for everyone. Cooking would go on for several days, and there would be all kinds of good things to eat, every kind of dish you can imagine would be represented at the noon meal. Dignitaries of the Church would be present for the big event on many occasions. There would be speaking and the chapel would be filled. This tradition is still carried on today with the same enjoyment as it was then," she said. "We usually would have a big dance at someone's house at night."

In her book, Imogene wrote that a history of the Nettles family would not be complete if it did not include a part of the history of Oak Grove Branch of the Church which was organized in January of 1898. She has given an account of the Church as she remembers, and also was told by her family, friends and neighbors who were there.

"From the time the Elders came by the home of my great-grand parents in December 1896, until the organization, they would preach and teach the restored Gospel when and wherever they could. They used school houses, members' homes or just preached in the open," she said. "People would gather wherever they knew the Elders would be. The missionaries endured many hardships but were received warmly by some of the people who made arrangements for the gospel to be preached to their family and friends."

"The first person in the area said to be baptized," Imogene said, "was Serrilda Douglas Clemons, known as Aunt Rilde." That was April 4, 1897. Henry Nettles, Imogene's uncle told her that within just a few months about 75 people joined the Church. They included John J. Nettles I and his wife Martha J. Miller, John Jefferson Keene and his wife Sarah E.C. Brill, all in the creek at the Fred Rich bridge, just down from the Nels Croft home. In 1898, John Jackson Nettles II and his wife Melvina were baptized in Barker Branch, just off road 239 South, behind the old Johnny Edenfield place and the old Midway school house.

"There were baptisms at what was called the hog hole," said Imogene. "It was situated between the Johnny Keene home and the home of John Nettles III home."

The organization of the Branch took place Jan 16, 1898, and John Murphy was sustained and set apart as presiding priest. A brother in the Church by the last name of Kran was sustained as clerk. Bro. James Terrell was the first Sunday School Supt. and William Henry Nettles served later as the second Sunday School

Superintendent.

"The Saints first built a brush arbor on the site of the present Oak Grove Chapel. An arbor," Imogene explained, "is a shelter built of poles, and lattice work on top. The top is then covered with brush or fronds to keep off the sun and rain. The seats were made by putting rough hewn planks across wood blocks."

With the Church growing, the members wanted to erect their own building to meet in. It was begun by members donating their time and resources when ever possible. Some of the pioneer families Henry Nettles remembers, other than him, are the John Jackson Nettles I, II, and III, Martin Nettles, John Q. Dicks, John Banks, Johnny Keene, James Terrell, J. Jackson Blackwelder, Louis Edgar Nettles, the Murphys, Jordans, Hendersons, Clemons, Douberleys, and Jackson Waters.

"Families donated land, money, and many back breaking hours helping to build the chapel part," she said. "Uncle Henry told me it was very hard-work to cut the boards way back in Alligator Swamp. Two men would carry a stack of planks about one quarter of a mile out of the swamp. One man would carry the load holding on to a skid like apparatus in front of the planks. A second man would carry the planks in like manner at the rear. At the edge of the swamp they would load the boards onto wagons and haul them to the church site."

By the fall of 1907 the church was, 'hulled in', with top and sides so the members could hold meetings in the building.

"They didn't have any heat at all that first winter," said Imogene. "You can imagine how one's faith could be tested under those conditions."

It took several years to complete the structure.

"I am sure those were times of great trials, but it was also times of great growth," she said.

"The building originally had wood shutters for windows and two doors on the west end of the building with the pulpit in the center of the east end," explained Imogene.

"Membership grew," she said.

"In the early 1900's the Rock Hole in Swift Creek became the most prominent place for baptisms because it was close to the area of the church building and adjacent to the roads the people traveled. With two sets of bridges crossing Swift Creek near the Church, the Rock Hole became the local baptismal. Imogene remembers the 'spot' well.

"It was about two-hundred yards behind our house and adjacent to the church," she said. "The double bridges spanned the two forks of the creek. I had been born almost on the banks of the creek so to speak, the 12th child in a family of 13 children. We spent many

hours swimming there along with brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, cousins, other relatives and friends. It was the local swimming hole for every one in the area for miles around. Fish fries and picnics of all kinds have, and are still being held on the creek's bank. My grandparents used the site as a butchering place for several years, due to the accessibility of the clean running water.

"Just down the creek, around the first bend where the creek made the fork, the bridges were constructed to facilitate travel," she said. "In the rainy season, when the creek and branches would overflow their banks, these bridges would float on water. Many is the time this writer has ridden across them in a wagon or car as they were held down by the weight of the vehicle and held in place as nearly as possible by some strong man, or men, with the aid of perhaps a tree or two that just happened to grow in a very handy location. This was an exciting things to do, although it was sometimes a bit scary. The most fun of all was to run across the bridges as they floated, almost afraid to breathe with so much excitement and apprehension.

"I learned to swim there, and was baptized there on Sept 8, 1940. It is still the place many modern-day converts choose to be baptized."

The cemetery that adjoins the church grounds has a story too.

"Eddie Henderson was the first person to be buried in the cemetery and my father and Uncle Henry dug the grave he is buried in. It is located near the back of the cemetery and a little to the left of the middle. At one time the place was surrounded with large stately oak trees, but many of the oaks had to be removed due to decay from within. There are still enough of them left to refer to the area as Oak Grove," she said.

"The little Church drew many people, some walking long distances, others driving buggies or wagons, bringing their noon meal packed in a box or trunk," explained Imogene.

"During the rainy times those who walked would remove shoes and stockings and wade through the water. Some drove through the creek where ever they could find a place shallow enough," she said. "Others would have to cross branches of water and many families would have to drive their buggies and wagons across the floating bridges to get to the meetings. These stalwart pioneers did not consider any of this a sacrifice since the reward was so great.

"Many special spiritual experiences have happened to most of us that grew up in the Oak Grove area," she said. "Suffice it to say that the testimonies of most of us have been reinforced and our spiritual courage increased by them. Yes, Oak grove is a sacred and precious part of our Nettles' history. Through the years the faithfulness



and courage of these early pioneers keeps strengthening our family's testimonies."

*The following are some statistics on Oak Grove gathered by Imogene.*

John Jackson Blackwelder was the first Branch President.

Emma Kerce Blackwelder was the first Relief Society President and Leona Williams Nettles was one of her counselors.

John Jackson Blackwelder was the first member of the Branch to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Joseph Glenn Nettles, E.G. Knight, Luther Thomas and Woodrow Dukes served as Branch President.

In the early fifties so many people had moved from their farms and away from the area that there was not enough priesthood to carry on the work independently, so Oak Grove became a dependant Branch under the Lake City Ward.

From then until 1960 there were several presiding Elders. A few were: Earl Waters, Selwin Thomas, Duane Dopler, and F.W. Bedenbaugh from Lake City and George Johnson from Jacksonville.

In those days Sunday School and Sacrament meetings were held in the morning. Bro. Bedenbaugh got the people to change their Sacrament meetings to Sunday afternoon and also organize the primary again.

The Relief Society was not organized then and the few sisters that attended Relief Society from Oak Grove met with the Lake City Relief Society.

In March 1961, J. Felton Smith was made the presiding Elder and served in this capacity until Oct 24, 1971, when on this date, Oak Grove had grown in the priesthood and was made an independent branch again.

J. Felton Smith was sustained and set apart as Branch President and served until June of 1976.

Imogene N. Smith was set apart as Relief Society President Nov 4, 1971, with Eva W. Dicks and Gail W. Peacock as her counselors.

William O. Copeland was West Stake President at that time.

Ernest R. Peacock served as Branch President

William O. Copeland served as the Stake Patriarch  
*See Oak Grove Section for more information and the lifestyle of the Saints who lived in the community*

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*I am glad to know that I have been a Mormon for seven years. I believe that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, and that the Book of Mormon is the word of God.*

*Miss Lillie Carroll*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, Sept. 5, 1908*

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*I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God and that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. And I am thankful to our Heavenly Father that He has blessed me with a knowledge that I might know of these truths.*

*Cora Melvin*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, Sept. 5, 1908*

*I am glad to bear my testimony that I know the gospel is true. I have been a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints seven years. I have been healed when sick, and have received many blessings. My husband, two sons and myself are the only members in our little settlement. We have persecution but it makes my faith stronger. I am glad I am a member of the true church.*

*Mrs. Emma Gatlin*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, Oct. 24, 1908*

*Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*

*Seathorn Flates Mission*

*Atlanta, Georgia*

*May 8, 1922.*

Dear Brethren and Sisters:

We need all the encouragement and strength we can get to battle with the difficulties of life. The examples of great and favored men of the Lord build us up.

If your way appears to be hedged in, and your pathway barred in with difficulties, read the answer the faithful Nephi made to his father, when his father told him of the Lord's commandment that he (Nephi) and his brethren were to return to Jerusalem and secure the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass. Nephi thus answered his father:

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father, I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of man, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.

"And it came to pass that when my father had heard these words, he was exceeding glad, for he knew that I had been blessed of the Lord."  
-- 1 Nephi 3:7,8.

This example encourages us, dear brethren and sisters. We can live our religion, have family and private prayers, keep the Word of Wisdom, pay our tithing, for the Lord will prepare the way for us to do these things. Happy are we if we keep the commandments of God without murmuring. The Lord bless you.

Your brother in the Gospel

*Chas. A. Ballis.*

CAD:G

*I enjoyed reading your letter, dear Bro. Blackwelder*

# CARLOS L. PADGETT

Palatka, Florida

*This story has been taken exclusively from the June 15, 1981, interview made with David F. Boone in the Palatka home of Carlos L. Padgett. It was conducted through the James Moyle Oral History Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.*

Carlos Lincoln Padgett was born at Glennville, in Tattnall County, Georgia, on September 23, 1908. A few years prior to his birth, his father, Dallas Bradwell 'Dall' Padgett who was visiting his sister Molly across the Altamaha River from him in Wayne County, picked up a little publication by Parley P. Pratt known as The Voice of Warning. Although he had a very limited education and could barely read, he understood enough to know the pamphlet held merit. According to his son, his father made the following remarks to his wife when he returned home.

"This man is right and the others are wrong."

"And Mother, whose name is Queen America Dawson Padgett, said to him, 'Now, Dall, you may someday find out that you're wrong and you'll be sorry you said that.'"

Not long after he had read the pamphlet, the missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came to the door of Dall Padgett's home.

He invited them in.

"They held a meeting, I'm not certain, but I believe the cottage meeting was held at his father's home, the home of my grandfather, Andrew Padgett. I've heard him tell the story that when the missionaries were preaching their discourse, he said, 'I found myself gripping the rowels of my chair, because I was so enthralled with what they were saying.'"

"I think my father knew from the time he had read a few pages in the Voice of Warning that he had something, and there was nothing else that he had ever heard of that would compare with it."

Dall Padgett joined the church in 1902.

"I was raised in an atmosphere that taught me that Mormonism was true, but I wasn't baptized until I'd passed the year of eight, because at that time the World War was on and the missionaries were few and far between. I was baptized by an Elder Ralph at the age of eight years in March of 1917.

He remembers that Mormons were not popular in the area.

"I remember going from school one afternoon to spend the night with a friend, Grady Anderson. A girl, Molly Anderson, not his relative but who was an Allen Anderson's daughter said, 'Look at that little old

Mormon'. That had an impact on me! I knew I was somebody that people around here don't like, because I'm a Mormon."

"The only thing that we had for Church activity was that our father talked to us. He did it often, and he did it effectively more than weekly. When the missionaries came, he got the books from them, and whenever there was a periodical, he took that. He took the Liahona and Era. He would take those and read them and he would tell us the contents. I've heard him many, many times bear his testimony to his children while sitting out on the front porch in the evening that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. Sitting out there, he would talk to us for maybe two or three hours about the gospel. And when it was cold and we sat around the fireside, he would read us something and then he would talk to us about it and he would tell us that the Church was true, that Joseph was a prophet of God, and he bore his testimony to us a number of times about that.

"My mother cooked and washed and ironed for them. There was never anything too good that she could fix in the way of a meal for the missionaries.

"Those memories will remain with me forever.

"Even in 1932 we had no Sunday School. We were sheep without a shepherd for many years. When I went on my mission, I saw the effects of that all through the area where I labored. The missionaries had come, they had baptized, they had taught the gospel, people had believed, but they had gone on and they had left no shepherd. We saw people who were members in name only, and their sons and their daughters were without shepherds and they didn't care. They hadn't been trained. Unfortunately they hadn't been given the gospel, like my father had taught us and had born witness to it time and time again to his children. They hadn't had that. So sheep without shepherds will stray.

"When I left on my mission in 1932, I was twenty-four and scared. It remains a miracle how I was called on a mission living in such an isolated place. I assume that Fred B. Porter was commissioned by President Charles A. Callis to seek out wherever he'd find someone that he thought had the spark of the gospel in his life, and it landed on me and it landed on my cousin, James R. Boone. I sweated that thing out after he told me he was coming. It almost took everything in this world that I had to ask my father what he thought I should do. Without hesitation my father said, 'I think you ought to accept it.' And I did".

"No one that I can recall was ever as afraid as I was to get up before a congregation in a sacrament meeting and give a talk. I don't believe that it's possible to be more afraid than I was. I was in Savannah, Georgia, at first. Then my first companion, Elder Fred Malan,



loaded me in the back of an open truck that he hitchhiked, and we went to McRae and spent the night. From there we went to Eastman and he put me out on the railroad track and that's where I held my first street meeting. He left to go get a drink of water, and I was left alone there with maybe 50 people gathered around to listen because before he left he told them I was the speaker. I ended up not being afraid, I didn't care who was there, kings, queens, or not. I enjoyed it. I served my mission with Brother James R. Boone, and I believe I can say this in honesty, I believe we held the most street meetings in one day that was ever held in the Southern States. Once we held six street meetings in one afternoon. As far as I know that was a record.

"I was out about 17 months. I had come home to have an appendectomy operation but I went back out. I had a little mission experience in South Carolina. I held my first funeral service down below Columbus, Georgia. It was a graveside service. There were some people there in dire poverty. This was in the year when the Depression was at its depths. Some people were near starvation, they had nothing at all whatever.

"Charles A. Callis was the mission president. He called me and my companion, and said, 'We're getting letters from Saints in Whitfield County, and they want the missionaries to call upon them. That's where Joseph Standing and his companion, Rudger Clawson, had contact with a mob and Joseph Standing was murdered at Vernal Springs, near Dalton, Georgia. Rudger Clawson lived to come back and bear testimony against them. The Church had closed that county to missionary activity. President Callis called us into his office and said, 'We have Saints up there in that county. Brother Padgett and Brother Gilbert, what I want you to do is to go in that county quietly. I want you to visit the Saints. Hold no public meetings and come out quietly.'

"It had been 54 years since missionaries had been in that county, from 1879 to 1933.

"Well, we felt honored to have this call. We went into the county. We had a list of the Saints, and we called upon them privately and I can't remember that we even held a cottage meeting. I'm not sure. I wish I could recall that now. But we visited them. In one of the homes we visited, this member of the Church took the Liahona, and she was just as poor as anybody has ever been in this world, I do believe. When she spread a little meal for us, I'll tell you what she gave us — a little small corn cake and she opened a jar of canned briarberries, and that's what she gave us. What she gave two wasn't enough for one hardly, but that's all she had. But she still took that Liahona. One of the widow's mite that she had, she could buy that periodical, which probably didn't cost more than a dollar at that time.

"Anyhow, she went to a trunk and she opened the trunk up, and I have never in my life seen as many name cards of Elders as was in that trunk. There must have been 100 to 150. And in that trunk she had a little book called Countless Talks on Doctrine. I'd heard my father talk about that book, and I was skillful enough to talk her out of that and I still have it to this day, unless I've lost it.

"She told me they used to live in Tennessee, and then they had moved down to Georgia. You know how tenant farmers move around. She told me, 'My husband has sat on the front porch with his shotgun across his lap while the mob walked the road and the Elders held a cottage meeting in our home.

"The only time I encountered any persecution of any kind was once when I was tracting, an old man ordered me off his porch in LaGrange. He told me the missionaries had come there, deceived a woman, taken her to Utah and abused her. I took out a pad and pencil and said to the old gentleman, 'Give me the name of the woman and of the Elder,' and he couldn't do it. I said, 'Now I know enough about this church to know that the Mormon missionaries don't do that kind of thing.' And he said, 'Get off of my porch,' and I got off. He might have had a double barrel shotgun right back there behind the door, you know.

"I went to Buchanan, Georgia, where a group of Saints had made a Mormon settlement, and it flourished for a while. They built a church there and the missionaries found it a refuge. After laboring around all over, they could come there and they had friends, and a place where they could at least rest up and get their clothes washed and have food and clean clothes and were welcome. At a July 4th celebration once one of the missionaries went into the river to seine for fish, and got tangled in the seine and drowned. The spirit of gathering got in that little colony of Saints there and it was flourishing while the enemies of the Church were active. They burned down their frame building, that's how bitter they were in that community at that time. After the church burned, the Saints gathered together and started picking up stones to build them a church that they couldn't burn. They erected a building of stone after a few months. In order to safeguard it, certain brethren would take a watch for so many hours to keep it from being ravaged or defaced.

"One evening just about dark, old Brother Brannan was standing guard at the door of the church when a man drove by with a mule hitched to a go-cart of a little wagon of some kind, and he saw Brother Brannan standing there and he leveled his pistol at him and shot at him. He missed by a few inches, but it was almost on a parallel with his head, his nose or his mouth. He hit the

wall and the bullet smashed into the wall. Well, that's all it took and Brother Brannan raised that old shotgun and he poured a load into him. He missed the man but hit the mule. That thing went out over the community and Brother Brannan willingly and on the advice of the sheriff spent a few days in jail to keep from being lynched.

"I've seen where the bullet hit the wall outside the church. Brother Brannan was one of what I'll call the standards. He was one of the men who stood up for the rights of the Church in that community. He was one of those who didn't go West but stayed home and helped build up the Church in that community. I knew him personally.

"In 1933 I came into the Atlanta area. While I was there Elder Melvin J. Ballard of the Council of the twelve preached the most beautiful and entertaining and instructive sermon that I had ever heard in my life. I remember that he entertained us with his talk for something like two hours. When I felt and knew that he was beginning to bring it to a close, I said in my heart, 'Go on, go on, go on.'" At this conference a man from Alabama, and I don't remember the town, told of an experience or a revelation that he had to know of the truth of the Church, and it was manifest to him by the sign that he had asked for. When he came to the conference, I must have given a talk in the conference, though I do not remember, he asked that I be the one to baptize him, and after the service I did so. I have lost contact with the man, but some years later in Randolph, Utah, Elder Melvin J. Ballard was holding a conference. I sat in the rear of the building and I heard him tell this story about the man. And though I was a little too timid to hold my hand up or ever contact him thereafter, I was the identical man that baptized the man that he was talking about and referred to.

"In the beginning of 1934, Charles A. Callis was leaving the Southern States Mission and Elder LeGrand Richards was coming in as mission president. My health was a problem and I had talked to both of them and they had decided that the thing to do was to release me. This was about January 4, 1934. Then the question came up, 'Who will sign his release?' with Richards entering, Callis leaving. It was settled that Charles A. Callis would sign my release, and so far as I know, I received the last release that Charles A. Callis would sign and he signed more than 4,000 of them.

"One special experience I had on my mission was with my companion one morning hitchhiking outside Gainesville, Georgia. That's the way we got around back then, just hold our thumbs out until someone stopped. Well, lo and behold, that morning a little old Ford pulled up and who would it be but Charles A. Callis and Sister Callis and two lady missionaries. And that little

old automobile, which must have been a '33, couldn't accommodate much more than that, but he said, 'Get in.' He had been called to Greenville, S.C. to preach the funeral of a young church member who had been killed overseas. He invited us to go with him and we did.

"My companion and I labored around Andersonville, Georgia. This is where the Confederate prison was, where they kept many of the Union prisoners during the War between the States. I walked among the rows of the dead, and there was something over 13,000 of them buried there by the Andersonville prison. The commander of that prison is the only man that was tried and hung for his part in the war.

"After I returned from my mission I returned to Jacksonville, Florida, and attended a missionwide gathering in Lackawanna Park. They called it a field day and it was on the Fourth of July, Pioneer Day. Brother Boone wasn't released from his mission at the time, but he and I approached LeGrand Richards, our mission president, and ask him if we could have some time off and go out to Salt Lake City and go through the temple, and he allowed us to do so. We left the following day and hitchhiked to Glennville, Georgia, our home. We held a meeting at our home, and then the following day we were ferried across the river, I assume by my brother Parley. We went up on the highway and as I recall, we decided that we'd make better time if we separated. But amazing as it may seem, from there all the way to Chicago we spent every night together. My last ride or his last ride picked up the other and we spent each night together.

"When we arrived on the outskirts of Chicago together we took the elevated train to the fairgrounds. The Chicago World's Fair was in full swing and the Church had a booth there. We went to the Church booth and there we met with a number of our Mormon missionaries and enjoyed ourselves very much. When Sunday came, we attended the Church nearest to the fairgrounds. It was the first Sunday of the month so we bore our testimonies and through that meeting we were put in contact with a family named Hughes and they offered us a ride to Salt Lake City. They'd come there to Chicago to buy a new automobile. So we rode in that automobile back to Salt Lake. I remember the terrific heat in Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, and Wyoming. We would actually ride with the windows closed to keep out that burning heat of the open prairie there. This was the year of the great dust storm. It was dry and burning hot, and in many places the dust blew so deep it covered the fence posts. The year of 1934.

"We stopped off in Evanston, Wyoming, to visit with my sister and her husband. When we arrived in Salt Lake City, we went through the temple. President Callis



introduced us to the President of the Church, Heber J. Grant. He showed us his office.

“Brother Boone returned, but I stayed out there a year. My fiancée from Jacksonville came out in June and we were married in the temple. Her father was a foreman of the Seaboard Coastline Railroad, so she and her sister rode a pass out and rode it back. Of course they wouldn’t let me go, so I hitchhiked back, after I was married. I got as far as Chicago, and fortunately I had enough money to buy me a ticket from Chicago to Jacksonville and then I was reunited with my wife.

Carlos Padgett’s name abounds in historical records pertaining to the Church in the South, attesting to his devotion and faithful service to build up the Church in the areas where he served.

## THE PADGETTS OF SOUTH GEORGIA/FLORIDA

Submitted by **Richard Merrill Padgett, Sr.,**  
son of **Lyman E. Padgett,**  
son of **Douce or Dow Bradwell Padgett,**  
son of **Andrew Jackson Padgett,**  
son of **Hopkin Padgett.**

My great-grandfather, Andrew Jackson Padgett, married Nancy Almania Stafford in Tattnall County, Georgia on the 8 of February in 1860. On the 12 of January in 1874, Nancy gave birth to twins, Dow and Daisy. They were the seventh and eighth of 11 children born to the couple. My grandfather, Dow, said he was always told the story of how he began walking by the age of five months and never stopped. With a sack of corn on his back, he would leave after breakfast every morning to feed and herd his cows. It was open range in those days, so each morning when he left home, he would walk many miles in different directions as the roaming cows could be anywhere. It was late when he returned home each evening.

Grandfather Dow was a self taught man, having received only two years of formal schooling. He loved to read, especially about Abraham Lincoln and the writings of Orson and Parley P. Pratt. He named two of his sons Orson and Parley. Grandfather seldom sat down without a book in his hand and was always at ease in the company of well-learned men.

As a young man he had to work hard. By the time he was 14, he went to work for a Mr. Middleton who had inherited some land and wanted to fence it. Grandfather said he could split and lay 14 sections of fence a day working from sun-up to sun-down.

He was very ambitious. While still a young man and before his marriage, he had purchased 220 acres of land for \$425. He cut and pulled cypress logs from the river swamp, had them cut into lumber and built a home. He hewed every shingle and the house is still standing today in 1997.

On the 22 of November 1899, at the age of 25, he married 20 years old Queen America Dawson, the daughter of Gilbert Henry and Laura Stacy Anderson Dawson. One year later to that day, the first of their 11 children was born. They were Lela May, Orson Clinton and Parley H., Mamie Lee, Alvin Joseph, Carlos Lincoln, Nettie Lee, Vida Jane, Marchus James, Lyman E. and Ruth. Four of the children, 86 years old Nettie Lee Strickland, 80 years old Lyman E. Padgett, 78 years old Ruth Stafford and 84 years old Vida Jane Bennett are living at this writing. (1997)

Five months after the couple married, an event occurred that changed their lives forever. Dow was visiting his sister across the Altamaha River and on his way home, he stopped in to see some friends. While visiting with the husband, the wife came in with a pamphlet. She said, “I have something here that the Mormon Elders brought and I’m going to burn it because I don’t want the children to see it.” Dow said, “Oh no, don’t burn it, give it to me. I’d love to read it!”

The name of the coveted pamphlet was, *The Voice of Warning*, by Parley P. Pratt. Dow read the pamphlet and declared, ‘If that’s what they (Mormons) teach, that’s what I want.’

It was close to a year later when Elders from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came to Dow’s gate. When they asked if they could come in and hold a meeting there that very night, Dow got on his horse and gathered up his friends and family for the meeting. Fourteen people responded. Grandfather Dow told how he sat there gripping the rounds of his chair until his knuckles turned white hoping that the Elders didn’t teach anything different than what he had read in the pamphlet. They didn’t.

My great-grandfather, Andrew Jackson Padgett who was Dow’s father, arrived a little late for the meeting and sat outside on the doorsteps. When the meeting adjourned Dow asked his father if he had heard the message, and if he had, what he thought of it. His father replied, “If I ever heard the gospel preached, I have heard it tonight!”

Dow was ready for baptism, but Queen asked him to wait and study it more and be sure. So he waited. After his work was finished the next day he said to my grandmother, ‘Queen, I’m sorry that I wasn’t baptized. The next Elders that come through are going to baptize me whether you are ready or not.’

True to his word, grandfather Dow was baptized on the 18 of March 1902 by Elder William Furner who later wrote in his journal that he had canvassed Tattnall County and that Brother Dow Padgett was the only one who would let them in to preach the gospel. Queen was baptized on the 19 of July 1903. It is thought that her delay was caused by her father whose attitude toward the Mormons was hard for a long time. Following Queen in baptism was Dow's brother Samuel who joined on the 26 of July 1903.

Dow's sister, Eliza Malinda Padgett attended a meeting with the missionaries at the home of her father, Andrew. She had not been moved with what she had heard until the last line of the third verse of the closing hymn, We Thank Thee O God For a Prophet, was sung. The words, 'while they who reject this glad message shall never such happiness know,' became her inspiration to be baptized on the 25 of July 1904. Her son, James Roland Boone, became the first patriarch to serve in the Florida Stake following its organization January 19, 1947. Her grandson, Robert G. Boone presently serves as patriarch in the Jacksonville North Florida Stake.

My great-grandfather, Andrew Jackson Padgett and his wife Nancy Almania Stafford, never joined the Church. Grandfather was the son of Hopkin Padgett, a Baptist minister that established the first Baptist Church in Glennville, Tattnall County, Georgia, as well as Baptist Churches throughout Florida, and his mother was Mary Ann Dubberly. Andrew and Nancy were the parents of 10 children: Dorinda Dicey, Joshua Jackson, Miriam Wealthy, Steward Hopkin, Joanna Jane, Eliza Malinda, Dow Bradwell, Daisy Mabel, Samuel David and Nancy Viola. My grandmother Stafford was the daughter of Elijah Eleazer Stafford and Penelope Surrency.

When grandfather Dow joined the Church there was no church building to meet in or organized Church in the area, to take his family. But each night he would call his children and say, "Soap is cheap, water is plentiful, no need to go to bed dirty." He would then read and explain the scriptures to them. The family would always kneel in family prayer.

Grandfather Dow sent two of his children, Carlos and Ruth, on missions.

Eventually members of the Church built, or purchased, a meeting house across the river in Jesup, Georgia. Elder LeGrand Richards wanted to dedicate the building, but could not because it was not free of debt. Members came to grandfather and told him their problem. He gave them a signed blank check and told them to make it out for what they needed which was \$5,000.

On the 13 of August in 1936, Dow and Queen trav-

elled to Salt Lake City with their daughter Nettie and her husband Odell Strickland, to be sealed in the Salt Lake Temple.

In my youth, I lived with my grandparents because of the great love I had for them. My grandmother, who sort of adopted me, took me everywhere she went. Grandmother said I once told her that I was going to sleep with her until I got as big as my daddy. Some mornings, as grandmother and I would be resting in her bed, I would hear a noise and look up. There was a crack in the boards above my head where there had been a knot hole and Grandpa would put a piece of stick candy through the hole and shake it to my delight! Grandpa had palsy in his right hand so he had to sign all of his checks with his left hand. I asked him one day why his hand shook like that and he replied it was from scraping and cleaning plows. For many years, I knew no different.

Grandpa Dow did well financially. He loaned money to many people in the county during the hard times. After harvest time, he would ask one of his boys to take him around to those in debt to collect his money. Many would say, "Dow, I didn't make it, I don't have the money, here is my farm." Grandpa would reply...'If you can't make it, I can't either, see you next year.' He never took a man's farm. He caught a man stealing one of his cows once. He made the statement, "I should have known that the man's family was hungry and should have given him the cow so that he wouldn't have had to steal it."

As I grew up in Tattnall County there was no church building for many years, so we would meet at our house or at Aunt Eliza Boone's home. I remember the sacraments with ho-cake bread freshly cooked that morning and one tall glass of water which was passed and shared by all present.

My parents, Lyman E. and Audrey Evelyn Kirklighter Padgett, moved to Darien, Georgia when I was about 13 years of age where the members of the Church consisted of a few of my relatives, the Boones and Padgetts. In the middle to late 1950's, my family would drive to Brunswick where we would meet with four or five families in the W.W.C.A. building.

In 1971, Primary meetings were held in Darien. In 1973, Darien became a dependent Branch to the Brunswick Branch. In 1974, Darien became a branch with my cousin Donell Boone called as the first branch president. I was called as the third branch president October 18, 1981. I served for six years and on Sunday, November 15, 1981, when the east Stake was divided and the North Stake was formed, I was called to serve as 1st counselor in the Jacksonville Florida North Stake Presidency. Nine months later, on August 14, 1988, I



was called as the stake president of the Jacksonville Florida North Stake of Zion.

From the humble beginnings of my ancestors joining the Church, there have been thousands who have served faithfully in the kingdom. It was no small miracle that happened to our family many years ago when my grandfather Dow received the pamphlet, Voice of Warning on that fateful day while visiting with his friends who lived across the Altamaha River.



*Richard Padgett of Darien, Georgia  
President, North Florida Stake*



*Libby and North Stake President Richard Padgett with President Gordon Hinckley  
50th Anniversary Celebration - Florida Stake*

# MATTIE DOBSON STRINGER ROBERTS

Sanderson, Baker County, Florida

Mattie Roberts was born the fourth child to George Lacy Dobson and Daisy Maynard Fraser on November 8, 1908, at the Bradford County, Florida farm home of her paternal grandparents, Seaborn and Martha Ann Alford Dobson. Her mother, a native of Sanderson, Baker County, Florida, was the first to joined the Church of Jesus Christ in May 1913 after travelling Elders from the Church held a meeting in the little town of Sanderson.

In addition to Mattie, the Dobson family consisted of sons, Wilber, Ray, James, Joseph and Donald and daughters Eunice, Gertrude and Edith.

On March 19, 1918, Daisy Dobson had her four older children baptized. Mattie remembers that day well.

"I remember Papa taking the four of us (Wilbur, Donald Eunice and me) and the two Elders, President Winder and Elder Bhumell(?), in a mule and wagon out to the Mann Branch which was about two miles out from Sanderson to be baptized, and it was late, almost dark, when we were baptized.

"Mama would have the children baptized as they came along and Papa never objected except when she was getting things ready for Joe to be baptized. He got a little peeved and he told her he never believed in baptizing children. She said she told him, 'Well, until you object I am going to have it done.'

"Papa did not join the Church until May 30, 1926. What seemed to bring him around was my brother Wilbur getting killed. He was baptized the next Sunday following Wilbur's death."

Mattie has observed the Church's growth in her area almost from the beginning.

"There was a small church at Sanderson. It was a little school building given to the Church by William Daniel Mann, a member. I believe it was in 1930 when a church building was built there. During this time we would go to Sunday School and the Elders would come through maybe every two or three months and stay for a week and hold meetings. There was no Primary for the children or Relief Society for many years. Finally, in the 40's both were organized."

Today, a modern chapel stands in Macclenny, twelve miles east of Sanderson.

Mattie Roberts was widowed in 1951. She was a school teacher for many years until she was appointed postmistress at the Sanderson Post Office October 5, 1945. She remarried in 1952 and was widowed again

in 1957.

She has served in various offices in the Church: Sunday School Secretary, Relief Society President, Sunday School teacher, Relief Society Counselor and faithful Visiting Teacher. She was a Temple Ordinance worker in the Washington Temple with her brother Joe and his wife Homie and cousin Mabel Cobb. Later she worked as an ordinance worker in the Atlanta Temple.

Through the years, following the example of their mother, The Sanderson Sisters, as they have been referred to for more than half a century, are recognized for their faithful and benevolent works. Regardless of any occasion, the sisters have been at the door of friends and neighbors, arriving first with food and offers of service.

Mattie, Eunice and Gertrude are now the remaining members of their family. At age 88, Mattie is still actively engaged in good works. Eunice, whose home was built next door in the same location her parents lived, now spends her days in a nursing home. Gertrude lives across the street from her sister.

In the area where Mattie has lived most all of her life, she is respected as an impeccable example of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Her name evokes the immediate thought of the ideal example of faithfulness, integrity, virtue, compassion and possessor of the greatest gift of all, Charity.



Mattie Dobson





*Samuel Nathan (Nes) Smith*  
*1876-1938*

# NATHAN SMITH

Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida

In 1915 Charles Zetterower and his wife Lucy were neighbors of Nathan Smith and his family on East 23rd Street in Jacksonville, Florida. The Zetterowers were members of the Mormon Church, and he had even built a wooden building on his property for them to hold meetings. They had invited Nathan over for Cottage Meetings, but he had refused to attend. When they held the meetings at Brother Zetterower's house, one could often hear the preaching of the missionaries' voices carry outside. Nathan would work in his yard and garden and could often hear what was being said. Before long he agreed to attend their meetings, and he liked what he heard. At first his wife Bessie wouldn't attend with him. Their Methodist minister heard Nathan was attending the Mormon meetings and paid him a visit. He said to Nathan, "If you join that Mormon Church you will go to Hell."

Nathan replied, "If the kind of folks in Hell are like the Mormons, then I'll be happy there." The minister left and they didn't see him again.

On February 7, 1915, Nathan and his daughter Sally were baptized. The following week his wife Bessie and son Layton followed. After the wooden building on the Zetterower property was destroyed by a storm, Nathan built a wooden building on his property for the members to meet in, but in a few years it too fell prey to a storm and was blown away.

After that, the members went to Church in the Riverside area on Short Street until the chapel on Park and Copeland Streets was completed in 1926. They went to Church there for a few years until they decided they had enough members to meet in their own area. They used various buildings: In Panama Park; Evergreen Avenue and 14th Street in a store; at 16th and Main Streets in the Syrian-American Club (over the Dixie Bar where they had to clean up beer bottles each Sunday morning before they could have Sunday School); at 7th and Silver Streets in the Springfield Woman's Club; and finally they bought the Evangelical Church building at 9th and Market Streets for six thousand dollars in 1940.

Nathan held the office of a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. Because he had the habit of chewing tobacco, he was not able to advance any further. He was a Sunday School teacher for many years. He taught the Gospel Doctrine class, and it was said he was the best teacher in this area that anyone had heard. He was truly dedicated to the gospel. Every Sunday he fed the missionaries in his home. On Conference Sunday there would be a dozen or so missionaries and many would spend the night. Sometimes a couple of them would

stay for a few days or weeks if they were low on money.

In the spring of 1938, Nathan became ill and was bedridden for most of the summer before passing away on September 28th..

A few months later on January 10, 1939, he was permitted to return in his spirit body and talk to his son Dean. Nathan gave him some wise counsel for his family and then bore his testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel. These words have been recorded for his descendants.

Many faithful members of the Church are in the Smith/Murray families because Nathan listened to the truth and had the courage to accept it. His daughter, Sally Smith Murray, remained faithful to the gospel and as a widow raised her six sons to be strong in the Church. On Sunday mornings Nathan would come by in his Model T and pick up his daughter and her boys for Church. Afterwards they would eat at Nathan's house along with the missionaries before returning home. The large round table with the revolving lazy susan in the middle of the table on which the food was served is still remembered by his descendants today. The wooden table that they sat around was made by Charles Zetterower, a true friend and neighbor, who gave the Smith family the gospel that has been a priceless treasure to many grateful generations of Nathan Smith's descendants.



*Sally Smith Murray, May 1930  
with sons Edward, Robert and Talmadge.*





*Susie Blackwelder and Luther Thomas*  
*Oak Grove and Lake City, Columbia County, Florida*

# LUTHER T. THOMAS/SUSIE BLACKWELDER THOMAS

Oak Grove/Lake City, Florida Area

Growing up in rural north Florida was difficult enough, but the days of the Great Depression were even more so. Luther Thomas, born April 17, 1913, the son of David Elias and Pearlie Tillis Thomas, lived in Lulu with his parents and five siblings. It was while he was attending school in the area that he met the daughter of John Jackson and Emma Kerce Blackwelder who lived about five miles away in Oak Grove. The Blackwelders were second generation Mormons, devoted to their faith, and John Blackwelder was President of the small branch of the Church at Oak Grove. The David Thomas family were of another faith and when they thought their son was becoming interested in Susie Blackwelder, they opposed the marriage. However, on December 30, 1933, the young couple eloped to Lake City, in Columbia County, and married despite the protest.

After their marriage the young couple felt the pangs of the Depression as they sought to make a living for themselves. When Luther was offered a job in Sante Fe, New Mexico, he took it, leaving his bride behind. Within two months he had saved enough money to send for her and with frugal management they returned to Florida in a year. Luther had saved enough to buy a truck, and he got a job hauling logs from Lulu to Jacksonville. John J. Blackwelder took every chance he could find to teach his new son-in-law about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Luther's spiritual nature was receptive and he began to believe the things he heard. When his faith was strong enough he was baptized in the "Rock Hole", in the creek that flowed behind the Blackwelder's home and near the Church.

Little did anyone know, or even expect, that the event that spring, on April 7, 1935, would provide one of the greatest and most loyal members of the Church to ever serve in that area. One that would also produce continuing generations of loyal priesthood that would not only serve in responsible callings in the Church but serve missions through the world as well. He was baptized by Thomas A. Little, Jr. a missionary from California and confirmed by his father-in-law, J. J. Blackwelder all on the same day.

On December 4, 1938, Luther was ordained an Elder by Brother T.C. Copeland and sustained as Branch President of Oak Grove Branch, succeeding his father-in-law who was released after 25 years of service. At the time the Southern States Mission president was Merrill D. Clayson and James R. Boone was the Florida District president (organized in 1937). Luther's intuitive ability

to lead the Saints was evident to these leaders, as was that of his wife Susie, who was sustained as the Young Women's President at the same time of her husband's calling.

Within two years the young couple had saved enough to purchase a 280 acre farm on the Tuskenegge Road in Columbia City, not far from Lake City. As soon as they moved their membership to the Lake City Branch, he was called to serve as a counselor to Johnny Milton, the branch president. Because of his leadership ability, leaders in the Church sent him to serve as the branch president in Cross City, a small struggling branch. The 55 mile trip was expensive, but the 100 laying hens they had on their farm generated the necessary money for gas.

Meanwhile two of Susie's brothers, Parley and David Blackwelder, were working in Haines City during the fruit picking season making very good money. They encouraged Luther to join them there for the season. He took their advice, bought a flat bed truck, hired a crew of pickers and loaders. On March 9, 1944, while living in Winter Haven their first son, Ronald Luther Thomas was born.

After the fruit picking season ended, the couple, and their son moved back to their farm in Columbia City. He was immediately called to serve once again as the Lake City branch president.

Meanwhile, he became employed by the Eastern Forest Research Center at Olustee, a job he held for 30 years.

On January 19, 1947, the long anticipated first stake in Florida was organized in Jacksonville and the Lake City Branch was made a ward. Luther was ordained a High Priest and sustained as the Bishop by Apostle Harold B. Lee.

Just a few weeks following, the couple's first (and only) daughter, Riata Susan was born. With the establishment of the new ward much more work was needed. The couple decided to sell the farm and move to Lake City. Their second son, Duane Elias, arrived there on December 18, 1948. A month later the couple purchased a 40 acre farm on the outskirts of town and Luther divided his time between working on the farm and helping to build the new church on Alachua Street. Another son, Timothy Jackson was born March 20, 1951. Susie, meanwhile was devoting her time to her family and church callings. According to her husband, Charles A. Callis, had advised all new bishops that they were married to the Church and the women were married to the home and children. She faithfully served in the Church and her family. Twice she served as Relief Society president. Twice she served as Primary president. There were teaching assignments in the ward and stake,



but she maintains her main calling in life was the rearing of their children. She had earlier promised the Lord if He would bless her life with children she would raise them up for him. She took this promise very seriously and was always mindful of this responsibility.

As her sons grew it was never, "If you go on a mission", it was always, "When you go on a mission." Growing up as a Mormon in Lake City at the time wasn't popular, but the children were taught that they, and the Church, would be judged by their actions. The children grew strong, and bonded, developing a deep love for their parents and for service in the Church. All three of their sons served missions; Ronald (Rocky) in France, Duane in Argentina and Timothy in the Oregon-Idaho Mission. Three of Ronald's sons have served missions and one of Duane's sons.

Before her death, Luther's mother, Pearl Tillis, and one of his brothers, Roy, were baptized.

Luther and Susie Thomas served a mission at the Washington, D.C. Temple in 1980.

In 1984, Luther was called and ordained as a stake patriarch by Chester Tillman, president of the Gainesville Florida Stake of which Lake City was a part. In 1986, Lake City Stake was created and he continued in service as patriarch for a total of 11 years under stake presidents' Ernest Peacock, and Z. Vincent Smallwood. He was released in 1995.

For many years the couple owned and operated Thomas Mobile Park down the street from the Lake City Florida Stake Center on Country Club Road. In 1996, they sold their business, but continue to live on the property which is the same little farm they have called home for 49 years. They divide their time between their 19 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. They still serve faithfully whenever and wherever they are called, and continue to be an ever present strength and inspiration in the lives of their family and friends.

Related articles: Oak Grove Branch

## *THE SACRED PRAYER*

*Joseph was a little child  
Whose faith led him one day  
On a special journey  
Where he knelt to pray.  
And God our Heavenly Father  
Stood before him there  
And by His side was Jesus  
Who heard Joseph's sacred prayer.  
"Oh, God, my eternal Father,  
I come so humbly-  
Please answer in Thy wisdom  
This important thing for me.  
Tell me in Thy judgment  
Which church on earth is Thine.  
I seek Thy understanding  
For the true church I must find."  
The light of heaven brightened  
And showered down pure love  
And then he heard the voices  
From where they stood above.  
"You will serve a mission  
And by this you will show  
The knowledge that WE give you  
Is for all the world to know."  
And there were many other things,  
They said to him that day-  
As he knelt in humble faith  
The sacred prayer to say.  
When Joseph left the grove of trees  
That bright and glorious day  
He was very certain  
He had been shown the way!  
And in the years that followed  
The truth he brought to pass  
Laid a great foundation  
That through all time will last.*

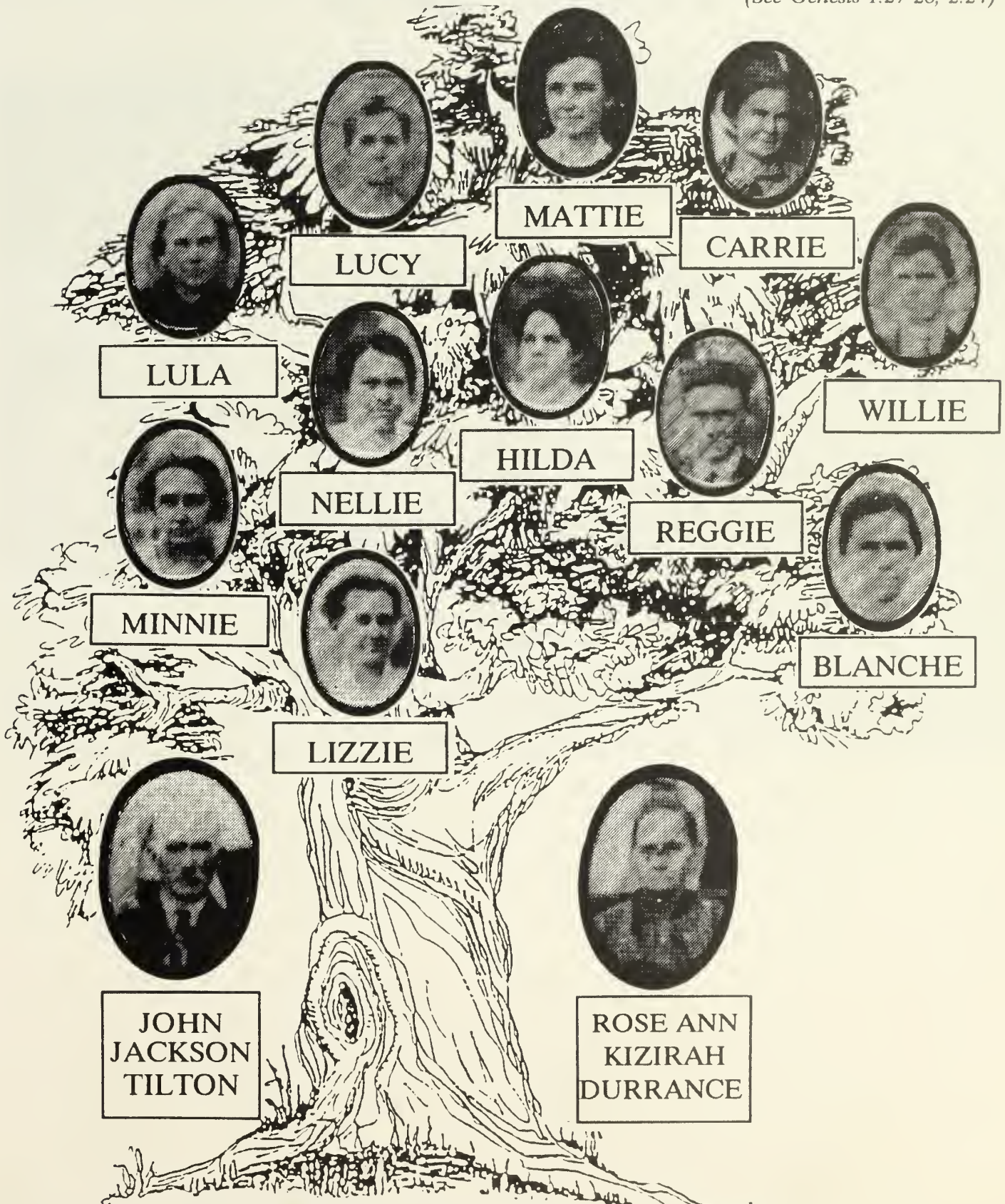
*La Viece M. Smallwood*

# A Precious Gift

## The Joy of Belonging to a Family

Our Heavenly Father began to people this earth by establishing a family with Adam and Eve as parents who were to bring children into their home — a pattern for us all to follow.

*(See Genesis 1:27-28, 2:24)*



*Tree used courtesy of Gordon and Toni Adams*



# *Tilton Family*



*Three Generations of Tiltons  
attend a family reunion in San Mateo, Florida  
April 10, 1955*

# TILTON FAMILY IN FLORIDA

*(The beginning LDS Tiltions)*

*\* The following story was taken from the book, Tilton-England to Florida written by the granddaughter of John Jackson Tilton, Edith Herrington of Palatka, Florida*

## JOHN JACKSON TILTON 1849-1928

John Jackson Tilton was born in what is now Florence County, South Carolina, on August 17, 1849, the sixth of twelve children of William Jackson Tilton and Lydia Hannah Eaddy. He left home to find work and ended up in East Palatka in Putnam County, Florida. By the time he was 17 years old, the 5' 6 " Johnny was working in an orange grove for a man by the name of Mozier.

Mozier's place was located where those needing to cross the river to Palatka for supplies could get boats. This is why William Durrance, who lived a few miles away, noticed young Johnny (as he was called) lying on a pallet desperately ill with malaria. He became worried about this young man and at home that night related the incident to his wife Louvina. The following morning it was decided by the family that George, William and Louvina's son, would return for Johnny and bring him to the Durrance home to be nursed back to health. When he recovered, the Durrance family gave him work and he remained with them in their San Mateo home. Before long he had fallen in love with their fourteen-year-old daughter, Kizirah and they were married March 4, 1869, when Johnny was nineteen-years-old. William and Louvina gave the couple a parcel of land near their home and the couple built a modest home in what was later called the Solana Field.

The local school teacher, Mrs. DeGassy lived near the newlyweds and soon Johnny was being taught to read and write by her. George Durrance became Johnny's best friend and attended school with him.

About the year 1879 a friend induced Johnny to buy property in Moccasin Branch in St. Johns County. He built a home and planted an orange grove but later found the house was mistakenly built on another man's property, but the problem was resolved when discovered. The children attended St. Joseph Academy, a Catholic Convent and Johnny bought a new wagon for his daughters to ride to school.

The family moved to Shell Bluff in Flagler County where Johnny traded a horse and wagon for a 118 acre farm originally owned by a Mr. Shipes, thus the name 'the Shipes place'. Eventually Johnny had three houses

on the farm. Besides the original Shipes place, he built a four room log house and even later a two-story house. The area was known as Salt Branch because of a small stream of brackish water on the property. Johnny farmed 20 cleared acres. Cypress trees on his property were plentiful and Johnny would cut them for his logging business which was his only money making project at that time. At one time he moved his family to Daytona where he cut timber south of that city and Kizzie ran a boarding house. They soon returned to Shell Bluff, in the Salt Branch area. Their house was about one-half mile from Crescent Lake.

Johnny's black curly hair turned gray at a very early age, but his wide set blue eyes remained clear as his complexion.. He had a great sense of humor, was very talented musically, especially on the violin. He played for the community dances taking his daughters with him to sing, and oftentimes took them with him in the evening after supper to serenade their neighbors. He purchased his wife Kizzie the first wood stove in the community and everyone came to see 'Kizzy's' stove.

In the summer of 1899, two young Mormon missionaries, Elder Summerhayes and Elder Skidmore, walked several miles from the small town of Espinola, Florida, through the woods to the home and farm of Johnny and Kizzie. They had been sent by Kizzie's sister, Jane Durrance Burnside, who had previously visited Kizzie and told her about how two missionaries were going around preaching like Peter and Paul of the New Testament. After dinner the family, including a maiden aunt, Eliza Durrance, sat down to hear the young men's message. The women of the family listened to the gospel for the first time and accepted its teachings, but only Aunt Eliza could be baptized because she was the only one who didn't have a husband. The men of the family had heard rumors that the Mormon missionaries were traveling around and baptizing women to take back to Utah for their plural marriages. After her baptism Eliza, called 'Aunt Sis', was not too welcome in the homes of various family members. Kizzie believed the missionaries' message and would feed them and give them a bed for the night when they came through the area. As time passed each one of this family came into the Church except for the youngest child, Reginald. Johnny was baptized on February 27, 1916, and before a branch of the Church was organized in San Mateo, he allowed Sunday School to be held in his home. Later he and Kizzie gave property to the Church on which a little



**Eliza Durrance**



white chapel was constructed. There Church members held their meetings, weddings, funerals, family reunions and so on. The original building was only one room, but later a stage, kitchen and class room were added. Today the building is no longer owned by the Church but is in possession of Johnny and Kizzie's descendants. Johnny preceded Kizzie in death. He died April 6, 1928, and his funeral was held in the San Mateo LDS Chapel and he was buried in the San Mateo Cemetery. He was 79 years old.

After Johnny's recovery from Malaria as a youth, his employer Mr. Mozier who had failing health, returned to his home in the north. He had grown very fond of Johnny and offered to take him North and educate him. Johnny declined and remained in Florida. His descendants often reflect and wonder how it would have been for them had he chosen to go North. Instead they continually express deep gratitude for the blessing of their family's pioneer heritage. They often reflect on the circumstance in Johnny's teen years that brought him and Kizzie together, for without that they may never have had the advantage of being members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## ROSE ANN KIZIRAH DURRANCE TILTON

1854-1931

*Taken from the book: Tilton — England to Florida. This sketch was compiled by Nona M. Wright of San Mateo, Florida and Edith T. Herrington of Palatka, Florida.*

Rose Ann Kizirah 'Kizzie' Durrance was the fourth child in a family of six born December 4, 1854, in San Mateo, Florida, to William Irvan and Louvina Prescott Durrance. She married John 'Johnny' Jackson Tilton at the age of 14 and became the mother of eleven children, nine daughters and two sons: Lizzie Bula, Minnie Sota, Louella 'Lula', Lucy Tenzy, Martha 'Mattie' Jane, Carrie Mae, William Fritchiff, Blanche Corene, Nellie Beatrice, Hilda Bell and Reginald Elwood.

She was very serious and religious by nature so when her sister Jane Burnside visited and told her of two LDS missionaries that were going around preaching like Peter and Paul of the New Testament, she wanted to hear more. Her nephew Arthur Durrance brought them to her home and Kizzie immediately had a testimony of the message's truthfulness. As she shared the gospel with her family, the married women among the relatives accepted. However, their husbands believed the untruths being spread that the Mormon lifestyle included polygamy and denied their wives permission to join. Because wives, at

that time, had to have their husband's permission to be baptized, only Eliza Durrance, Kizzie's maiden sister, would become the first of the family to join in 1899.

Meanwhile Johnny and Kizzie decided they needed to do something to help their daughters find suitable husbands, so they moved to Jacksonville, rented a boarding house, and the single daughters ran it with one or the other parent there to supervise while the other parent stayed in Shell Bluff with the younger children and ran the farm. Travel was by boat from Crescent Lake through Dunn's Creek to the St. Johns river and on to Jacksonville. It was an all day and part of the night trip.

The Tiltons lived in a small house next to the boarding house. One day, while Kizzie and the girls were in Jacksonville and Johnny was back on the farm, Kizzie allowed Louella, Lucy, Martha, and Carrie to be baptized as 'Mormons'. They were baptized in the Trout River on February 11, 1900. When Johnny learned of this he became very irate. So, when it was Kizzie's turn to be back home on the farm, Johnny arranged for his next oldest daughter, Blanche, to get married at age fifteen-and-a-half years old to William Henry Cope. The ceremony took place at her sister, Minnie's home. Martha and Minnie tried to talk their father out of it, but he said that the others had joined the Mormon Church and were 'all going to hell' and he intended to 'save' this daughter. When word reached Kizzie she was very upset, so on her next turn in Jacksonville, she joined the Church without her husband's permission. For a long time there were bad feelings in the family over these events, but eventually it worked out.

Lucy Tilton married one of the family's boarders, a widower, Charles Zetterower, on September 9, 1900. Louella married Louis Hart, another of the family's boarders but Mattie and Carrie did not find anyone suitable. They went West to Utah with a family named Brightson from Palatka who had joined the Church. Their aunt Eliza Durrance sold some of her cows to raise the \$500 they needed to make the trip. Carrie worked in a laundry while there and Mattie studied voice and for a time attended Brigham Young University. Carrie eventually met and married Reed Oakley and remained in the West, but Mattie came home with a teaching certificate and taught school in East Palatka. She boarded at Hanna's Boarding House when, at the age of 42, she fell in love with Mrs. Hanna's son Perry. They married even though Mattie was 13 years older than he. When a young child Mattie had fallen out of a tree and struck a sharp limb that pierced her stomach injuring her severely. It was always felt by the family that this injury was the cause of her inability to bear children. Eventually Perry left Mattie for another woman and they divorced. He returned to her when he was older and she remarried

him and cared for him along with a young son he had by the other woman he lived with while he was gone. It was because of a promise she made to his mother.

The headquarters of the Southern States Mission, presided over by President Ben E. Rich, was moved to Jacksonville the same year the Tiltons moved there in 1899. They became close friends with President Charles A. Callis and his wife Grace. Kizzie and some of her daughters assisted the Callis family when their twin babies died. President Callis became quite fond of Mattie as he loved to listen to her sing.

When the first Church conference was held in Jacksonville, the Tiltons were among those who attended the historic meeting. It was held, according to Lucy, in the old Duval Theater on Duval Street in the winter of 1899. President Ben E. Rich was the main speaker.

Lucy and Charles lived at 1023 East 23rd Street in Jacksonville and Charles, who joined the Church after they were married, donated a parcel of property to the Church where they could hold their meetings.

When some of the girls were married, the family moved to San Mateo where they bought a house, but they still farmed at Shell Bluff. They were visited on several occasions by President and Mrs. Callis who held meetings while in the vicinity.

One day two missionaries arrived while Johnny was planting sweet potato vines. They asked him to listen to their message. He told them he was in the middle of planting sweet potatoes but if they would be willing to help him finish the job, he would listen to what they had to say. The young missionaries rolled up their sleeves and went to work. Eventually Johnny's dislike for the Church subsided and to Kizzie's delight he was baptized in February of 1916. He and Kizzie celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in 1919.

Before there was an organized unit in the San Mateo area, Mattie and her older sister Kizzie were teaching Sunday School in the Presbyterian Church. President Callis found out about this, and on one of his visits he told them he wanted them to organize a LDS Sunday School. The sisters told him they had no priesthood to preside. He told them to do it anyway and called Mattie to be the superintendent of the first Sunday School in the San Mateo

In later years Kizzie, little and stooped, developed crippling arthritis, often falling down and calling for her husband to come and help her. Johnny died April 6, 1928, and life was never the same for her even though family members stayed with her and saw to her needs.

In September 1929 Kizzie and her mother left by train for Salt Lake City, Utah, to do their temple work. The trip was paid for by William Fritchiff, her oldest son. Lizzie, at age 60, had to assist her mother up and

down, and in and out of the sleeping compartment as well as with her bath, but she was glad to be of service to her mother and to share the wonderful experience of the blessings of being endowed and sealed as a family — then a rare opportunity for the Saints in the South who lived a great distance from the temple.

The pair visited Carrie Tilton Oakley, another of Kizzie's daughters and her family who lived in Utah. They returned to Florida in November.

Kizzie had a mole on her left eye lid which was taken off not long before her death because it became irritated as she blinked. She became terminally ill in 1931, following a stroke, and died at her home on East End Road in San Mateo, August 3, 1931. She was buried in the San Mateo Cemetery beside her husband. She was 77 years old and had 92 descendants.

All of Kizzie and Johnny's children, except for Reginald 'Reggie', accepted the gospel and became active members of the Church. Today her descendants are too numerous to account for and they are passing the legacy on to their children. Among her descendants have been patriarchs, stake presidents, bishops, full-time missionaries, stake and ward mission leaders, high counselors, (district and stake), temple ordinance workers, and the list goes on and on as they continue to actively build up the Lord's Kingdom. A great-grandson, W. Don Ladd, is a general authority serving as a Seventy in the Second Quorum.

The San Mateo home of John Jackson and Kizirah Tilton has been referred to as 'The Tilton Homestead'. It is dear to the hearts of family members who still hold



**50th Wedding Anniversary of John Jackson  
and Rose Ann Kizirah Durrance Tilton  
March 4, 1919 – San Mateo, Florida**

Seated: Blanche Corene Tilton, John Jackson Tilton, Kizirah Durrance Tilton, Louella Tilton Hart, Martha Jane Tilton Hanna.

Standing: Nellie Beatrice T. Haynes, Minnie Sota T. Young, Lizzie Bula T. Turner, Lucy Tenzy T. Zetterower, William Fritchiff Tilton, Hilda Bell T. Anderson, Reginald Elwood Tilton.

Not shown: Carrie Mae Tilton Oakley (empty chair to right is for Carrie who lived in Utah).



family reunions in the vicinity and try to imagine their ancestors living there. Since 1933 more than 80 of their descendants have served missions for the Church around the world. Further research as to their contributions is given by Nona Wright, whose husband is the maternal grandson of Lizzie Tilton Turner. In just one year 1986-1987 family members went to the Temple and did the following: 570 endowments, 1,988 baptisms, 1,175 children sealed to parents, 290 couples sealed, 1036 confirmations, 180 initiatories, (sic) 800 ordinations, officiated in 150 baptisms and 258 confirmations. (These records were reported to the family genealogists that year). In 1983 one grandson sent 6,500 names to the temple for baptism and endowment. And in 1984 a granddaughter sent 1,356 names to the temple. Nona Wright was converted to the gospel through her husband a great-grandson of John Jackson Tilton and grandson of Lizzie Tilton Turner. As of this writing in 1996, Nona's parents and five of their children joined the Church making 111 of her parents' descendants in the Church today.

From the effort of these two early pioneer missionaries has come this great legacy.

*The following information has been taken with permission from short sketches by Nona Wright, whose husband is the grandson of Lizzie Bula Tilton Turner and from the book Tilton: England to Florida by Edith Tilton Herrington daughter of William Fritchiff 'Willie' Tilton.*

- Lizzie Bula Tilton (1869-1953) married Jesse Alfonso Turner in 1886 at age 17.
- Minnie Sota Tilton (1872-1967) married William Henry Young in 1888 at age 17
- Louella Tilton (1874-1949) married Louis H. Hart in 1901 at age 25
- Lucy Tenzy Tilton (1875-1966) married Charles Zetterower in 1900 at age 25
- Martha Jane (Mattie) Tilton (1877-1961) married William Perry Hanna in 1919 at age 42
- Carrie Mae Tilton (1880-1960) married Reed Ami Oakley in 1916 at age 36
- William Fritchiff Tilton (Willie) (1882-1960) married Evelyn Mary Solana in 1914 at age 32
- Blanche Corene Tilton (1884-1970) married William Henry Cope in 1899 at age 15
- Nellie Beatrice Tilton (1888-1959) married Bogan Edgar Haynes in 1912 at age 24
- Hilda Bell Tilton (1890-1962) married George William Anderson at age 22
- Reginald Elwood Tilton (1893-1966) never married

When Lizzie Bula Tilton Turner was about 13 or 14, her father thought she was getting serious about one of the Yelvington boys, and was not happy because bad feelings existed in the family against the Yelvingtons, probably because of his connection with William Durrance, Kizirah's father. Lizzie tried to convince her father that



**Lizzie Bula Tilton Turner**

she had no interest but he packed her up and took her to St. Augustine and placed her in the Catholic Convent where she stayed about a year. Later she expressed gratitude for going there as she felt she had the opportunity to get an education while there. She was 5'2" and had black hair and blue eyes. She retained her slender figure of 115 pounds throughout her life. She was a fine seamstress. She would also gather palmetto fronds, strip and dry them before braiding and sewing into work hats for those working in the fields and use them creatively in her own hats. She was a talented musician playing the piano and violin. She was very strict rearing her children. When one didn't do what they were told, he/she would get a potato vine wrapped around his neck, or spanked on the legs with a small peach tree limb that cut the flesh. After reading the pamphlet 'A Voice of Warning' in 1898 she knew the Church was true but had to wait until 1909 to be baptized in the middle of winter in nearby Crescent Lake when she finally received her husband's permission. In 1915 Lizzie's husband and son were murdered by Tom Wright, a neighbor Lizzie had been kind to. She was left with a farm, two mules, and the home in town, some debts, children in their teens and her youngest, Lorie, age 11. With the help of her brother Willie, she planted a crop and paid off her debts. The mental anguish of the tragedy left her memory impaired for the rest of her life. Her greatest joy was found in the gospel, serving in callings such as Relief Society President. Her favorite scripture was found in Revelations 14:6, "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

For a while Lizzie lived with some of her family in Miami. While there her brother moved Otis Ferrell and family into their home in San Mateo and they took a lot of her personal things when they left. Uncle Gabe Turner let a colored man, who worked for him, move into the farm house and they burned it down cooking in

the fireplace. She stayed in Miami until the hurricane of 1926 when everyone was asked to leave the area if they had another place to go because they feared widespread disease due to contamination of the water. She spent the last of her years living in her home located between two daughters. Until her death she never complained or felt sorry for herself though she suffered tragedy and hardships all of her life on earth. She stayed busy serving others and lifting them through their hard times and troubles. Before she died she remarked that she would give anything to live twenty or more years longer so that she could experience and see all of the marvelous things that would take place in the world. Her grandchildren served as pallbearers when she died. She was buried next to her husband Jesse and son Roy in the San Mateo Cemetery.

**Minnie Sota Tilton Young** lived to the age of 95. She returned to live in San Mateo in her final years. She always wore very high heeled shoes up until her death. She was very stylish. She preferred working outside the house instead of inside chores. When she and her sister Lizzie were in their teens they began going to school at St. Joseph's Academy taught by the Catholic sisters. They would dress up like nuns, putting on veils and robes and one would stand at each end of the hay loft. They would get a switch and whale the daylights out of their imaginary pupils. She sang duets with Lizzie. Minnie was teaching school in Espanola when she met William Young who had come to the area to cut railroad ties. He and Minnie later married. Later he supervised the laying of track for the railroad and they moved around a lot. During the 30's when she was living in San Mateo, her circumstances were so bad that family members had to give them vegetables and maybe a piece of meat. Occasionally her son would get a day's work to buy grits and meal for them. She didn't feel worthy to be a member of the Church but after much persuasion on the part of her sister, Lucy, she accepted and was baptized a member of the Church.

**Louella 'Lula' Hart** was the shortest and smallest of the family. She stayed with her grandparents, Louvina and William Durrance, quite a bit during her young life. She read extensively and during her life became a well-educated person. She taught school at Moccasin Branch and used the money she earned to buy material to make clothes, hats and accessories for herself and her sisters to wear to church conferences and dances. She became the family seamstress with her sisters doing the house work. She designed her own patterns for their dresses, hats, slips, gloves, and coats. She married Louis Hart, a handsome young man over 6 feet tall with curly black hair and blue eyes. They went on a honeymoon cruise down the St. Johns River and returned to live at the boarding

house run by her parents. She was baptized in Trout River in 1900. She lived in Daytona Beach and Holly Hill with Louis. Her family enjoyed being together. They especially enjoyed her pot of soup and swamp cabbage Louis would bring home for her to cook when he went to gather firewood from the woods.

Louis and Lula moved back to San Mateo in 1945 into the same small home Louis had build many years before. There they lived out the remainder of their lives. Her family remembers that she always tried to build their self-esteem and made them feel that they had self-worth. Her testimony of the gospel was the greatest legacy she left her posterity. As her grandchildren surrounded her bed during her last moments on earth, they felt very lonely at her passing. They had lost not only their grandmother, but also their best friend. They were all special to her in some unique way.

**Lucy Tenzey Tilton Zetterower's** earliest memory was of her grandfather, William Durrance spending a lot of time with his best friend, Gideon Yelvington, a man he moved in with when he returned from a northern prison camp after the Civil War. They called him, 'Uncle Gid'. When her grandfather Durrance came to visit he would sleep with one of his grandchildren on each of his arms.



**Lucy Tenzey Tilton**

While living on a farm at Shell Bluff, about five miles from San Mateo, two Mormon missionaries came to their home and taught the family the gospel. They were Elder William Summerhaze and Elder Wasden. She moved with her family to Jacksonville and lived on Evergreen Ave and was baptized in the Trout River February 11, 1900.

She and her husband Charles Zetterower had five sons and one daughter and she reared Charles's son, Charles Carlyle Zetterower by his first wife Jennie Gertrude Swearington. When her son Lester, who had been brain damaged during birth, was about four years old, she had to have all of her teeth pulled. The doctor came to her home and had her lay on the kitchen table. He administered ether before pulling her teeth. Eventually Lucy had to have Lester admitted to Chattahoochie, a hospital for the insane. She sent him some pecans for Christmas one year and while eating one, he choked to death. Her daughter Vera, a gifted pianist, married, and soon after developed severe arthritis. She dissolved her marriage and returned home to live



with her parents. Lucy devised a way with a strap and harness around Vera's neck for her to type holding a pencil and tapping the keys on a typewriter to write words. Lucy was a strong person physically and mentally. Eventually Vera became completely helpless and Lucy had to tend to all of physical needs, as well as her husband Charles as his health failed. Charles spent his last year in a nursing home. Vera died too after 30 years of illness. Lucy fell and broke her hip and was never able to get out of bed again. She died at age 91.

#### Martha Jane 'Mattie'

Tilton had a beautiful soprano voice. She taught the pioneering Saints in San Mateo a lot about music that she learned when she moved to SLC for awhile and sang with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. She lived to be age 84 and was never blessed with children.



**Martha Jane 'Mattie'  
Tilton**

**Carrie Mae Tilton Oakley** went to SLC as a young lady, married and remained there most of the remainder of her life. She was very intelligent and was very well-informed about current events and could converse intelligently about national politics. She had two marriages. From the first marriage she had a daughter Kizirah, known as Zira who drowned in 1976. Her second marriage was to Reed A. Oakley in 1916. Their only child, a boy, was named Reginald. As a member of the LDS Church, Carrie was active and very devoted. In 1906 she was called to be the very first President of the young Women's Mutual Improvement Association in the Florida Conference. She died at age 80.

**William Fritchiff 'Willie' Tilton**, called the family's Sabbath child because he was the seventh child in the family. (*see story*) He died at age 78.

**Blanche Corene Tilton Cope** lived her adult life in Jacksonville and always welcomed the family with open arms when she was visited. When a child she lost the tips of her two middle fingers when they were caught into the cane grinder. When she was nine-years-old her family moved to Daytona Beach into an old large rented home on the ocean. The ocean salt water helped ease her mother's arthritic pain. She was a religious person. She met and married William Henry Cope, a boarder at her parents' boarding house in Jacksonville. Henry gave Blanche a small new testament for Christmas prior to their marriage and it is now in possession of her daughter, Nada Cope Adams. She was very close to her father and after she married he would often take the train to Jacksonville from San Mateo and ride the street car to

his daughter Lucy's house and almost immediately ask after he arrived, "Can someone take me out to Blanche's?."

In 1900 Henry and Blanche witnessed the destruction of the city of Jacksonville when it burned. They watched from an old wooden tower in Confederate park. She read numerous books in her thirst for knowledge. She kept a dictionary beside her to decipher any word of which she was unsure. After the birth of her first child, she declared, 'no more', but she soon forgot about the pain she experienced and went on to give birth to ten other children. Her first child, Corene, gave birth to eleven of her own children. Blanche made all the family's clothes, washed all clothes by hand until the advent of washing machines, and spent all day washing the family's clothes.

In the early 1920's many cultural changes were occurring in the United States, particularly relative to women's role in society. Blanche and her sister Hilda would often discuss these issues. On a particular voting day, the sisters discussed these societal changes while on their way to vote. Drastic changes were occurring in women's hairstyles after centuries of little change. At a particularly bold moment, Hilda turned to Blanche and beamed, "Blanche, let's get our hair bobbed. We'll worry about our husbands tonight." That was all the encouragement Blanche needed to break the long-held tradition. The atmosphere in the Cope home that night also experienced great change.

In 1911 she and Henry moved their family from North Shore in north Jacksonville to Chaseville on the south side of town. Henry and son Johnnie drove the oxen by horse to downtown Jacksonville to catch the ferry across the wide St. Johns River. Blanche and the rest of the family crossed the river earlier in a different location on a launch. They got separated and Henry and Johnnie were forced to camp under some trees with the oxen. The family would often ask Blanche to retell that story of the family's move to Chaseville. In 1918 Blanche got a job driving the school wagon to Brentwood school. She received \$60 per month and was required to furnish and maintain a horse.

The most painful experience of her life occurred in 1943 after the death of her husband. Her seventh son was killed fighting against the Japanese in the battle of Tarawa. She had signed for him to go to war at the age of 16 after much pressure from him. He was buried at sea, and from that day forth she never liked going to the ocean as memories of Ben being buried at sea were too much for her to bear. Her greatest comfort was her testimony of the gospel.

She and William left a great heritage. The numbers of their children and grandchildren and great-grandchild-

dren are now in excess of 500 persons. At the end of her life she was staying with her son Pete in Miami. She was in the hospital and everyone had been called to come to Miami. Nada and Violet were in the hospital and they each saw a light enter the room from a window and travel down under the bed. Violet saw a larger light enter and travel through the room. Nada moved the curtains aside to look out the window to see where the light might have come from. As she looked toward the bed she and Violet became aware their mother had just passed to the other side of the veil. She lived to be 86.

**Nellie Beatrice Tilton Haynes** was said to have had a hard life and was employed outside the home to help provide for her family. Her husband had Parkinson's disease. She worked at the local elementary school as the lunchroom manager and cook. She rocked some of her grandchildren in the big rockers on her front porch until they were embarrassingly old. Her plants flourished there. She had great faith in the hereafter and talked matter-of-factly about, 'when I go on' as though she was planning a train ride. She enjoyed her family which comprised most of the population of San Mateo and their chief recreation seemed to be visiting each other. One granddaughter remembers being taught to be aware of people who were lonely or needed befriending. She encouraged her to play with a little girl her age who was shunned at school because her mother was in a mental hospital.

Her children and grandchildren remember going to her house for Christmas. One of them, Celia Langford Christensen wrote, "No matter how late the hour Grandma would be waiting up for us with a snack and a hug when we arrived. She always had a small tree on a table which she decorated with lights and love and a dish of candy for the kids. I think she enjoyed Christmas as much as we children did, finding childlike delight in the occasion. The summer of 1959 my husband and I were staying with my parents awaiting the birth of our first child. Grandma was there when our daughter Denise was born. She was thrilled to have her first great-grandchild and bustled around trying to help with the cooking, etc. On Saturday, September 5th, she prepared an exceptionally good fried chicken dinner for us all. That evening as she was cleaning up the kitchen she said to me, 'I've lived my three score and ten years, have been to the temple, and have held my first great-grandchild. I'm satisfied with my life and I'm ready to go now.' That evening she went to stay with my Uncle James and Aunt Jackie. They brought her to Church the next day. She had been assigned to give a talk in Sunday School. As she completed her talk she had a stroke and slumped over. She was taken to the hospital where she died a few hours later." She was 71 years old. Her descendants

were left with a rich legacy of honesty, industry, love for family, and faith in God.

**Hilda Bell Tilton Anderson** reared a large family of nine and moved in and out of San Mateo a lot, but is remembered as a very special person. She was of medium height and on the stout side. She went to Utah for about a year to live with her sister Carrie. She returned and lived with her sister Lucy Zetterower. She was very close to her sister Blanche. She worked for the telephone company in Jacksonville and after work one day she rode the street car home. She left a book with her name in it on the streetcar by mistake and after she got off a young man, George William Anderson noticed it lying there. He opened it, saw her name and address and took it to her home. That meeting led to their marriage. The couple had eleven children.

During the Depression years the family moved a lot. Their last years were spent in San Mateo where they lived in the 'little house' which was originally the syrup house where her father usually made and stored his cane syrup. George converted this building into a house until he could build their home near by on land inherited from her parents. Hilda did not like inside work such as cooking and house keeping, but loved nature and outdoors. She enjoyed reading the Bible, theological writings and children's stories and books. She would often pantomime the stories she read. She was a striking beauty in her youth with good posture. Her feelings ran deep for her Savior. She was a very jolly person driving her serious husband 'up a wall'.

Her last years were difficult as she became ill with a rare disease that caused her small intestine to periodically perforate and hemorrhage. She was hospitalized often, had several surgeries and frequent blood transfusions. The gradual side effects from strong drugs reduced her weight greatly. She never lost her faith and would call for the priesthood to administer to her when the pain would become unbearable or the loss of blood would make her weak. She died at the age of 72.

**Reginald Elwood Tilton** never married. He was tall and big framed. He lived with his parents until they died, then he moved in with his brother Willie and his family. He was an excellent handyman, could fix anything, and was a big help around the farm. Willie had a small, one-room structure built in his back yard called the 'bunk house'. It held four double beds. This is where he slept along with Willie and Evelyn's three oldest boys. Like most of the family he was talented in music, playing the piano and violin. He made his first violin from a cigar box. He and his best buddy and nephew, Roy Turner, enjoyed playing for family and friends and community dances. Then when he was 21 years old his buddy Roy was murdered. Reggie was at his sister



Lizzie's house playing the piano when the news came of this tragedy. He went wild and split the front door with his fist. He never got over his friend's death.

Reggie had a small farm where he grew potatoes. When the banks closed their doors during the Great Depression, Reggie lost his savings. After that he began working for his brother Willie. He enjoyed a new car every year and bought one after harvest time. The last one he bought he turned over on the old shell road. After the accident, he parked it under Willie's barn and it stayed there until his brother-in-law George Anderson got it and made it into a truck. He always gave us children money, mostly nickels and dimes, but once in a while a quarter. When we were grown and went home to visit, he would do the same thing for our children.

When he became ill to the point that he could not take care of himself, his nephew, Willie's son, B.T. and his wife, Leah, took him to their house. He was hospitalized for a while when his leg bone broke as he was getting up. When he was released he went to Evelyn Tilton's house and she had a nurse's aide come during the day to care for him. He died 28 January 1966 at the age of 73. He is the only child of Johnny and Kizirah who did not join the Church in this life. He was loved by all the family.

## WILLIAM FRITCHIFF TILTON

*Excerpts taken from the book, Tilton-England to Florida by Edith Tilton Herrington*

William Fritchiff Tilton, known as Willie throughout his life, was a man of great strength and power which he passed down to his sons. The child of John Jackson and Kizirah Durrance Tilton became the strength of the family for his parents, sisters and brother who depended on him for support through hard labor. He was the first son, but the seventh child of eleven children, and he lived at home with his parents in San Mateo, Shell Bluff and Moccasin Branch until he was grown and then he moved in with his bachelor uncle, Samuel Manson Tilton, known as Uncle Sam or Sambo. This is where he was living when he married Evelyn Mary Solana. The couple lived in a home adjacent to where his Durrance grandparents had lived in San Mateo, and for all of their married life it was the place Willie and his wife called home.

He had known his wife all of her life. He was thirteen-years-old when she was born. His oldest sister, Lizzie and Evelyn Mary Solana's mother were the best of friends, so he drove Lizzie down to see the new baby. He sat out front in the horse drawn buggy and waited on the two women to visit. That's where he was when he

heard his future wife crying. He never would have thought that nineteen years later this little new born baby he heard crying would someday be his bride.

In those days families were big in numbers, but still, if anyone needed a home, doors were always opened and room was made somehow. In addition to the nine children of Willie and Evelyn, which made eleven, Willie's uncle Samuel 'Sambo' Manson Tilton, his maiden aunt, Eliza Ann Durrance, and his brother Reginald Tilton all lived with the family. According to Willie and Evelyn's daughter, Edith, 'Besides all of these we never sat down to a meal morning, noon, or night, that there was not 1 to 50 extra people to eat with us.'

Willie was a farmer, rancher and had a turpentine and pulpwood operation. In addition to his family, he helped sustain many of his relatives and friends.

In her book, *Tilton: England to Florida*, Edith Tilton Herrington wrote of her father.

"My father was not only a busy man working for a living, he also worked hard in Heavenly Father's kingdom. He joined the Church January 12, 1919, baptized by a traveling missionary, Elder Alma Burrows in Lake May which was near his home. He received the Aaronic Priesthood July 15, 1928, ordained by another traveling missionary, Elder H. Gordon Larsen. Newel Steed, Florida District President, ordained him to the



**William F. Tilton**  
1882-1960 – San Mateo, Florida

*I bear my testimony to the truth of the gospel, that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, and that the Book of Mormon is the word of God.*

*I. J. Tucker.*

*testimony from Liahona, The Elders' Journal, Aug. 22, 1908*

Melchizedek Priesthood, and office of Elder on February 30, 1930. Apostle Henry D. Moyle ordained him to the office of High Priest on November 14, 1950, following a Florida Stake Conference held on Hendricks Ave. in Jacksonville. He served the Lord in many offices and callings: Sunday School Superintendent, Branch President, Chairman of Genealogy, District High Councilman, and Home Teacher. In fact, he went hometeaching on the Sunday afternoon before his death the next night. He was a devout Mormon and had a strong testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and he truly loved the Lord.

“He enjoyed nature, such as watching his potatoes, cabbage, and corn grow. He expressed joy in seeing the new calf crop, or riding in the woods on his favorite horse to ‘tend’ his livestock.

“I was grown and married before I ever heard he and Mother have a cross word. He put a lot into living. He loved to go dancing; in fact, he and Mother went dancing about every Saturday night in his last years on earth — mostly at Moccasin Branch. They were a graceful couple on the dance floor, especially when waltzing.”

A week before he passed away, Willie travelled to Salt Lake City with his wife to check on his sister Carrie, who had cancer.

“They arrived back home on Saturday,” wrote his daughter Edith. “Sunday was the usual Sunday. He went to priesthood meeting and then Sunday School. As was the usual thing, some of us children and grandchildren went home with Mother and Daddy for dinner. Daddy visited with us, talking about their trip out West, then he took a short nap and after this he went home teaching. At the appointed time we all went to Sacrament meeting. The next day he got busy with his work and cow hunted all day. That night, Daddy went to bed — a well, and happy man. When the telephone rang the next morning, Daddy did not move. Mother realized he was not going to answer it so she got up, went to the other side of the bed to answer the call, and realized he had died. So a humble servant of the Lord and a highly respected man was called to greater works”

In the Palatka weekly newspaper, The Putnam Sun, reporter Jack Harper wrote the following about him.

#### **SOME PUTNAM COUNTY HISTORY DIED WITH W.F. TILTON THIS WEEK**

A bit of Putnam County History died with William F. Tilton Monday night.

Just stand almost anywhere out in the back country of this neck of the woods, throw a rock in the air and it will probably land on Tilton land.

Mr. Tilton raised his boys to be hard workers and

when harvesting time comes around a lesson we can all learn is to be had by watching the Tilton clan turn out, turn to and get the job done.

Mr. Tilton had a wonderful smile. A Jacksonville attorney here on a law suit against him this year said, “I wouldn’t have come if I had realized that man had such a smile.”

Mr. and Mrs. Tilton were great dancers up into their late years. Just three Saturday nights ago they attended the dance at Moccasin Branch and had a good time.

He died in bed while asleep. And you can just bet he was smiling, the way he did most of his life.

The couple’s nine children were Woodrow Wilson, Mary Blanche, Samuel Johnson, William Edward, Edith Louise, Virginia Evelyn, Henry Miller, John Jackson, and Bartola. *Tilton — England to Florida* by Edith Tilton Herrington is truly a masterpiece of history on her prominent and dedicated pioneer family. Their contributions to the building up of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the South is unexcelled in dedication and service, and is continuing today through the same devotion and labor of their first LDS pioneering ancestors.



***Rancher William F. Tilton on Haw Creek***

## **EVELYN MARY VIOLET SOLANA TILTON**

*Taken from a story written by her daughter, Edith Tilton Herrington*

Evelyn, pronounced Ev-a-lean by most, descended from the Solana family of Spain. Records in St. Augustine dating to 1594 include her eighth great-grandfather Vincent Solana. Evelyn’s father was Bartola Solana and the settlement of San Mateo was named for his father Mateo Solana because he was one of the first settlers there. Evelyn’s mother, Blanche Harriett Thompson was born in Rawden, Leeds, England and



came to America when she was nine years old with her parents, sisters and brother. In 1902 Blanche died four days short of Evelyn's seventh birthday. Two brothers had died in infancy so Evelyn, her sister Ellen and brother Jim were reared by their father and stepmother Mary Hilt Solana. To this union three children were born: Gertrude, Fetcher and Cora. Evelyn loved her stepmother who taught her how to crochet, make quilts, and other hand work. Her father, Bartola, was overly strict and rigid, hot tempered and unreasonable but mellowed later in life. She received a diploma from the eighth grade in San Mateo which was the highest she could attend. Her teacher wanted the school board to buy a typewriter so she could teach the children to type, but Bartola, a member of the board, objected. While she and her stepmother visited relatives once in St. Augustine she found a job answering the phone, with a man who had a wood yard and scroll mill. She had met and was courting William Fritchiff Tilton from San Mateo. He rode the train to St. Augustine to court her, but finally told her he was spending more money to make the round trip than she was making, so she quit her job and returned home finding a job in Palatka in McCrory's 5 and 10 Cent Store. Later, Willie hired her and her sister Ellen to cut his seed potatoes. They were married on Sunday afternoon January 28, 1914, by a Baptist minister named McRae. They lived in the house with Willie's Uncle Sambo Tilton, and this is where they lived the remainder of their lives. The couple had six boys and three girls: Woodrow Wilson, Mary Blanche, Samuel Johnson, William Edward, Edith Louise, Virginia Evelyn, Henry Miller, John Jackson, and Bartola all born in the house where she came as a bride. Many other people made their home with her and Willie, but she never complained and treated them as though they were her own family. Ofttimes there would be as many as 25 missionaries that came to stay when Church conferences, conventions, missionary district meetings and Pioneer Day celebrations were held in San Mateo. They stayed anywhere from a day or two to several weeks. She also fed men who Willie hired to help on the ranch.

According to her daughter, "Our house wasn't all that big, but room always seemed to be available. None of this extra work appeared to bother Mama — she just seemed to know how to remain calm and get the task done. She planned her work and worked her plan."

Evelyn was a Catholic, but on January 16, 1921, she was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by her father's brother William Solana. The event took place in Wiggs Lake, later renamed Davis Lake. She took her covenants seriously. She never refused a calling, nor did she ever ask to be released from one. She served as Relief Society president, Relief



***Evelyn Mary Solana Tilton***  
***1895-1971 – San Mateo, Florida***

Society counselor, Visiting Teacher and was a singing mother. She was chairman and ward records examiner in her ward. She spent hundreds of hours of record keeping and report making as secretary for the Relief Society in the branch, district and ward, and most all other auxiliaries. Record keeping was the thing she liked most. She compiled more than fifty Books of Remembrance for her children, grandchildren, and several cousins, writing most by hand. She did untold hours in genealogical research for her kindred people. She loved helping others, compassionate service was her second nature. She was always one of the first to arrive and give help to those who needed it for any reason.

In describing her mother, Edith wrote, "She enjoyed hand work, making quilts, embroidery and crocheting. She loved her flowers. The money from her 'calf crop' sales was her 'Santa Claus' fund. Christmas was a big thing at our house. She was especially fond of necklace and earring sets and had a lovely collection and no matter what type of material her dress was made—even the least expensive cotton materials looked like a 'vogue' on her with her matching necklace and earrings. She always looked lovely. Photography was another of her hobbies. We are indebted to her for if she hadn't had this hobby, we wouldn't have lots of the family pictures we now have to enjoy and treasure.



**San Mateo home of William F. and Evelyn Mary Solana Tilton, presently occupied by Vella (Mrs. Woody) Tilton.**

“Mama was five feet and four inches tall and on the stout side. When she was younger her hair was black, but it turned gray and then a lovely white. She wore very little makeup, except powder. Her eyes were sort of gray in color and possessed kindness in them. Her alto voice was as an angel.

“She and Daddy were extremely compatible and it was ever apparent how much they enjoyed each other. They enjoyed dancing together and went every Saturday night in their later years after they had reared their family and had more time to call their own. They had a good life together and lived it in peace and harmony. They always made decisions together striving for the end result to be right for those concerned. I didn’t always accept their decisions as being best for me, in my youth, but as an adult, I look back and see the wisdom in their never-ending tutoring and counseling.

“October 1940 Mama’s greatest dream came true. She, Daddy and we nine children went to the Salt Lake Temple in Utah to do our temple work. What a glorious thing to see our parents kneeling at the altar, to be sealed and to kneel with them and be sealed as a family for time and all eternity.”

As the children grew up and left home, their visits were a high point for Evelyn.

“We had such a large family there was rarely a day without some of us visiting,” wrote Edith. “What a little thing to do to show our love and concern for her.”

When Willie died on August 2, 1960, it left a void in her life and she spent many lonely hours for the next eleven years.

“Mama was smart and knew life must go on for her without Daddy so she kept herself busy with her many interests. She continued to be very active in Church up to the day of her death, just as Daddy did.

“Another traumatic thing in Mama’s life was the death of her third child, Samuel Johnson Tilton. With her knowledge of the plan of salvation and her faith in our Savior, she was able to handle it bravely.

“Our parents had their problems in life making ends

meet but when others needed help, if at all possible they found a way to oblige. Mama continued this practice after Daddy was gone. They were both very charitable people.

Evelyn suffered a heart attack and died in Putnam Memorial Hospital Monday, November 29, 1971.

“There is no doubt in my mind but that our Lord said to her, “Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” said Edith, “for her very presence brought sunshine.”

## ELIZA ‘SIS’ DURRANCE

*Note: Eliza Durrance was sister to Rose Ann Kizirah Durrance, wife of John Jackson Tilton. She was the first one in the Durrance family to join the Church. In time, her sister Kizirah would be baptized and thus the beginning of the Tilton family’s great contribution to the Church in the latter days. Because she lived with them and was such an important part of their lives, her story appears in their section.*



**Eliza Durrance (Aunt Liz) – first in Tilton family to join the church, on March 21, 1899. Her sister Kitzirah married John Tilton. Samuel Tilton joined the church in 1919**

Eliza was the first born of her parents, William Durrance and Louvenia Prescott when they lived in Clay Hill, now Clay County, Florida. In the mid 1850’s they came south, crossing the St. Johns River and settled in San Mateo, Florida. They were the first white settlers to arrive.

William built his family a home and began to farm. A son George was born. When the Civil War began, William went away to war and times were hard for Louvenia and the children.

As Eliza grew up a young man, John Yelvington, came ‘calling’ and asked for permission to visit on Sunday afternoon. Permission was given, but every time he came Eliza would run off and hide in the cornfield and wouldn’t come back until he left. Eventually he became disheartened and stopped coming over. The



Yelvington family had come with the Durrances from Clay Hill and the men of the families were good friends.

Her next suitor was Samuel 'Sambo' Tilton. Eliza had inherited some cattle and hogs and a little two-room house when her parents died. One day someone stole some of her hogs and she wanted Sambo to take care of the matter. He assured her he would, but in his way, not the way Eliza wanted him too. Eliza gave him a tongue lashing about his hesitancy. That apparently scared Sambo off because the following day he said to her, "Miss Liza, you know that thing that we were thinking about? Well, it's all off!"

From that time on the two of them always seemed to be at odds. Eliza never married.

In 1899 when the LDS missionaries came to the Durrance family in Shell Bluff and taught them the gospel message, Eliza was immediately converted. Though she could not read or write, she became a devoted member of the Church. Since she was not married she did not have to wait to be baptized like many of the other women in the family who were also converted. She became the first member of the family to become a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Eliza's sister Jane Burnside was converted but could not join at the time because she was unable to obtain her husband's consent. However she sent the missionaries to teach her sister Rose Ann Kizirah Tilton, wife of John Jackson Tilton in Shell Bluff.

On the morning of her baptism she went out on the porch and got her clay pipe. In those days many women would get together in the afternoon and have a smoke. That was their way of relaxing. She sat down with her pipe for one last smoke and when she finished she placed the pipe up on the ledge of the porch and never touched it again. Whenever she would pass by and look at it she would say, "I'm bigger than you are." She always left it there to remind her that she was stronger than the tobacco.

Because of her baptism, Eliza was not always welcome in some of the homes of family members. She still attended them when they were ill even when it meant she was subject to contracting the disease they may have had. When her sister Jane Burnside and family all had malaria, Eliza went to their farm house to nurse them. She came down with malaria as well and almost didn't recover from it. The family put her on a train at Yelvington and sent her to St. Augustine to the hospital.

Eliza was generous. When her nieces, Mattie and Carrie wanted to go out to Salt Lake City to be near the Church headquarters, they didn't have the money to make the trip. Eliza sold some of her cattle and got the \$500 the girls needed for the trip.

Later Eliza sold her little house and property to

Sambo so she could go to Salt Lake and receive her endowments. The agreed price was \$500. Sambo paid between \$200-\$300 and stopped paying. Eliza stayed with Mattie and Carrie about two years then returned home. She claimed the house still belonged to her, and Sambo, who was living in the house with Willie, claimed it belonged to him. The problem was never resolved so when Willie Tilton married Evelyn Solana, both Sambo and Eliza moved into the house with them.

While staying with Carrie and Mattie in SLC, Carrie bought Eliza a reading primer and spelling book and helped her begin to read. There was no one to help her when she returned home, but she was always proud of what little bit she could read in the primer.

She was described as being a big woman with a large frame, but not to be considered fat. She was said to have her family favorites and you had better hope you were one of them.

Throughout the remainder of her life she consistently helped the family by attending to them when they were ill, or needed her in any way. She was always willing to pack up and go whenever they called and wherever they were.

## THE TILTON FAMILY

*In a 1982 interview with her niece, Judith Evelyn Tilton Urry, Edith Tilton Herrington, author of Tilton: England to Florida described the daily life of her family. Here are some thumb-nail excerpts from this remarkable woman who has lived through the days of country living with no electricity and running water in the home to see man walk on the moon.*

*She is a woman who values her family heritage and throughout her life she has served faithfully and devotedly in the Church to honor the legacy they left her.*



Beginning with her mother, Evelyn Mary Solana Tilton, wife of William Fritchiff Tilton, a rancher and farmer, Edith said:

"Mama and Daddy had nine children, all born at home, in the same house, delivered by the same doctor, W.S. Miller. The mothers, following birth, always stayed in bed ten days and were treated like invalids for weeks afterward. Money wasn't plentiful, but Daddy managed to have someone come and take care of Mama. In those days there wasn't much talk about childbirth, pregnancy, or anything of that nature.

"There were three meals to be prepared and many times the noon meal was taken to the woods for the men

to have a warm dinner, and on many occasions food had to be taken out to them at night if they were camping. Also we carried supplies for their horses like grain and hay. In the early days we didn't have horse trailers like today. You rode your horse for many miles when it came time to rounding up the cattle.

"Mother would get up early and fix breakfast and the men would get off. If it was during school, lunches had to be made and we always carried them in a brown sack. We would line up however many lunches we were fixing, and we had to be careful not to have things that would spoil.

"We always had our main meal at noon, and then we had grits, and white bacon fried every night, and what ever was left over from the noon meal. It took Mama from 9 a.m. to 12 noon to prepare that meal every day. They cooked on a wood stove and in the summertime it was hot.

"We never sat down to a meal that there wasn't one to fifty extra people. Men would be there who worked for Daddy, visiting relatives, business associates, missionaries, etc.

"Every Monday was wash day, and Tuesday was for ironing. On Saturday the scrubbing was done. Our three great big porches had to be scrubbed all the way around as well as all the rooms in the house.

"Washing of clothes was done on a scrub board. We had a big wash pot and we'd build a fire under it after it had been filled with water and we'd boil the clothes to get them clean. That was done by black people mostly. Years before, Mother had all of that to do herself. We had three tubs, one to scrub in, one to rinse the clothes in and another for the second rinse. You wrung them out by hand then we hung them on the clothesline. We had clothes lines all across our backyard. Clothes needing starching were starched before they were hung up. When they dried they'd be stiff as a board, as Mama would say. When it rained we had to dry the clothes by the fire-place.

"On Tuesday the clothes were ironed, and to this day I hate ironing. We used what they called flat irons. We would heat them on the stove and then take a hot pad of some type and pick it up by the handle to iron. When the iron would get too cold, it was put back on the stove to reheat. We'd have another on the stove to replace it while that one was reheating.

"Our ice was delivered right to the house. We had a wooden ice box with two sections, one for ice, the other for food. We usually got a fifty pound chunk at each delivery.

"Mother did a lot of canning. We also butchered hogs out in the back yard and Daddy would butcher a cow. He also traded beef at the grocery store for staples

we couldn't raise like sugar, flour, salt, etc.

"The kerosene lamps had to be filled every other night. We'd sit them out on the back porch, take our metal gallon can back to the commissary, fill it up and then come back and fill these lamps. The wicks in the lamps had to be trimmed and the lamp shades washed. After we got our little Delco plant electric system, Mama put all the lamps on a sideboard, something like a hutch of today. I recall LeGrand Richards, who was at the time LDS mission president of the Southern States, and his wife Ina coming to our house sitting at the table, and he looked up and saw all of those lamps. I'd love to remember what he said, but I don't. I remember he said something to the effect, 'Now that is being prepared.'

"It was hard work back then, but we didn't work all the time. I can well remember many times when a whole family would come spend the day with us, and we had time for fun and play. Sometimes Mama would visit another family and while the women would visit, sew, embroider, crochet, or what ever, the kids would play and play. Women didn't work out of the home then.

"Mama and Daddy did the shopping and back then it wasn't jump in the car and run to town every time you thought you wanted a loaf of bread or something. I can remember my daddy saying before they started slicing bread at the bakery, 'If anybody ever invents a bread slicer, I'm certainly going to buy one'. It was his job to sit there at the head of the table and slice the bread for everybody and that was a lot of slicing.

"It was the grandest thing when school started and we got some new dresses. I remember Mama buying material and mostly Pauline Turner made our school dresses for fifty cents, and later a dollar a piece. Of course, dollars were few and far between back then. Mama made our underwear out of flour sacks and feed sacks sort of like a muslin-type material. Mother bought homespun material and made our underpants out of that if she ran out of the sack material.

"Mother always had scarves on her tables, dressers, and mantle piece. They were always starched very prettily. They were usually embroidered with a crocheted edge around each one. She made special ones for Christmastime which was a special day for our family. When we were all grown and had our own families everybody still went home for Christmas dinner. We never had a Christmas without ambrosia. To this day, because of the love Mother put into celebrating the birth of the Savior by having all the family gather together at home, I love Christmas. I love to plan, decorate, and I love to give. I'm sure it's because of her setting that example.

"Easter at Mother's house was just as wonderful. We still gathered after we left home, and have our dinner



beneath the shade trees in the front yard. After dinner we had our egg hunt.

"The community was a very close knit community out East End Road. We were all related. I don't remember ever having any fusses and squabbles over boundary lines or whatever. They were very kind people toward each other .

"We used to get out in the yard and play games like Haley over Andy, and May I." We had a bag swing that we hung in a big oak tree. To this day I love to swing on a sand bag.

"In those days, anything that you did that was against the teachings of your parents, regardless of whatever their idea of what you can and can't do, those things you were told not to do were just plain no-nos.

"As a child, I thought Mama was very strict, but now I know she wasn't, she just wanted to rear us properly and she did.

*Note: When Edith Tilton Herrington was called to served a Southern States mission for the Church in 1939, she was barely 18 years old. When she returned in 1941 she enrolled in nurses training at Riverside Hospital in Jacksonville. Since that time she has held numerous church callings faithfully and devotedly and carries on the work of her mother in genealogy, compiling Books of Remembrances and doing other loving deeds for her posterity such as the 545 page book she compiled, Tilton: England to Florida.*

WHO AM I ?

Who am I?

I'll search the world and see

Who am I?

I'll find out and be free

I know that God has sent me here to earth

And given me a special kind of birth

Who am I?

He'll tell me if I ask

Who am I?

Reveal to me my past

I'll tell the world

Just who I really am

Reveal to me and tell me, God, Thy plan

Thank you, God,

For showing me the way;

Thank you, God,

For telling me today

Just who I am and what my life must be-

I am Thy child and I will follow Thee


Words: La Viece M. Smallwood

Music: Linda Kay Leavitt



The above photograph was taken in the Autumn of 1899 at the Tilton Boarding House in Jacksonville Florida.

From left to right: Louella, Nellie, Reginald, Kizirah, Hilda & Lucy  
Back row: Mattie, Carrie, and LDS missionary William Henry Cope  
(who married Blanche), ukn. missionary and Blanche



## THE LITTLE TATTERED BOX



*In a little tattered box that I keep upon the shelf  
Is something that I value most and keep all to myself.  
And every so often, I open up the chest—  
And fondle hidden treasures there  
I long have laid to rest  
It happened oh, so long ago,  
When my children all left home.  
Let go my hand to take a stand  
Where each of them would roam.  
"Walk tall," I said, 'My child be wise  
and to your self be true;  
and always remember, dear,  
I'll be right here for you.  
A friend I'll be, a parent wise  
So should you need me, Come  
From across the miles, or just next door,  
my daughter or my son.  
I've kept the greatest treasures, dear,  
that bind us heart to heart  
And they lie within my tattered box  
when ever we're apart.  
For one day I took from around my waist  
an apron faded red.  
Frayed and torn from years of toil  
mostly it was threads.  
And with a tear, I held it near  
and cut the better part  
the pieces I'll remember most  
and hold close to my heart.  
For in the tattered box  
that I keep upon the shelf  
I take out the things I value most  
and keep all to myself  
I fondle faded apron strings  
and little curly locks  
that I keep packed away  
in my little tattered box.  
And when I am no longer dear  
where you can come to me,  
just open up my tattered box  
where you can plainly see.  
The little things that meant so much  
from which I couldn't part—  
the Ties that bind forever, dear,  
and reach us heart to heart.*

*Words and music: La Viece M. Smallwood*







*Woody and Vella Tilton  
Salt Lake City*



**Woodrow W. Tilton**  
**First Bishop, Palatka Ward**

## WOODROW TILTON

Palatka/San Mateo, Putnam County, Florida

When David Boone interviewed Woodrow W. Tilton through the James Moyle Oral History Program at his home in Palatka, Florida, on June 15, 1981, he captured an incredible part of southern LDS Church history. This epic account has been compiled from David's interview, along with gleanings from *The Tilton Family History* by his sister Edith Tilton Herrington, and from personal interviews with his widow Vella.

Woodrow W. Tilton was a big man, 5 feet, 8 inches tall and 200 pounds. He lived in a big house, three stories high, fifty feet across and about sixty feet wide, ran a big farm, (supervising a big crew over a thousand acres plus of cabbage and potatoes, ran a big cattle ranch, 400,000 acres with thousands of heads of cattle), was a successful timberman, and in general lived a big life, (county commissioner 18 years, bishop nine years, high councilman 17 years, served two missions, father of six children). Even the mention of his name evokes thoughts of big, enormous, gigantic. Beyond any doubt, his life was full and immense, and he was truly a tower of strength overflowing with tremendous energy.

He was born in the little community of San Mateo in Putnam County, Florida, named for his great maternal grandfather, Mateo Solano. In English, the Spanish name means 'St. Matthew'. He was the oldest son of William Fritchett and Evelyn Solano Tilton who were the first of the Tiltons to plant roots deep in the latter-day gospel of Jesus Christ.

Before the turn of the century, the Tilton family had not associated themselves with a particular church. It was the family's tradition that if religion wasn't just like they thought it should be, then they didn't accept it. That conviction existed in both the Tilton and Solano family clans.

Woody, as he was called throughout his life, always enjoyed telling the story of his paternal grandmother, Kizirah Durrance who was born in San Mateo within 100 yards of where he was born. Kizirah's older sister, Jane Burnside, lived with her husband in Espanola in Flagler County. In the year 1898 Jane sent word to the family members in San Mateo that there were 'some preachers' coming through town. "They were," she said, "preaching the true gospel." The 'preachers' were Mormon missionaries who had attended a Church conference in Jacksonville. As they walked the railroad tracks on their way to and from St. Augustine they took time in the small communities to teach the gospel. In Espanola, Woody's Aunt Jane believed what she had heard and quickly shared the good news with members of her family. Her sister, Eliza Durrance, who never married, was the first to be baptized, but Jane's husband protested and it was only after her death that the family could do her ordinance work. After Eliza, an avid pipe smoker, heard the Word of Wisdom taught, she laid her pipe on the fireplace mantel and never touched it again.

When the missionaries arrived in San Mateo they had been escorted by a man in the Espanola community. He had brought the missionaries over an old wagon trail forging some creeks and streams along the way. He once related the incident to the Tilton family expressing deep respect.

"When we got to deepest creek the Elders had on their usual suits of the day, their derby hats and so forth. The water was breast deep. I just walked right on in and they followed with never a complaint of any kind," he said.

Woody explained his grandmother's conversion this way.

"The women were the first ones that were most interested in the gospel because the men had heard all those stories about these Mormons taking these women to the West for plural wives and all, and they didn't go for that. My grandfather, who married Kizirah, had nine daughters and he wanted to take care of those daughters and see that they didn't get in a trap. However, many of his daughters joined the Church right away and the others before they died. Their husbands objected for awhile, but eventually they all joined and became the mainstay of the Church in that area. Grandfather joined the Church and became reasonably active before he passed away in April of 1928," he said.



On his maternal lineage, Woody remarked that only one uncle joined the Church through the influence of his wife, and until recent years was the only member of the Solano family besides his mother Evelyn who joined.

In the early 1920's, the President of the Southern States Mission visited San Mateo and organized a Sunday School for the children. Mattie Tilton Hanna was the superintendent and meetings were held in either Woody's father or grandfather's home, and that began his first activity in the Church. When he turned eight he anxiously awaited the travelling missionaries who would baptize him. In just a few months they arrived. As Woody was lead down to the water, the missionary, Elder Ethington, accompanying him walked with a limp. He had been teaching the gospel in Wildwood when a mob whipped him so severely he was left maimed for the rest of his life. Because of the incident, Woody said it was many years, before the missionaries were returned to the area. In fact, Woody said, because he was considered a Florida cracker and a person people in the area might relate to, he was sent as the first missionary to Wildwood after the persecution of Elder Ethington.

Woody said that persecution of Mormon missionaries was prevalent in Kissimmee, Florida, known as a 'cowtown'.

"Because we were cattle people, I knew a lot of people in Kissimmee. So I was also sent there and held the first street meeting that was held after they rode the Elders out of town on a rail tarred and feathered," he said.

Reflecting on his Church assignments, he noted that his first job in the Church, at age eight, was to paint a bench for us children to sit on during Sunday School at grandfather's house."

Travelling Elders were always welcome at the Tilton's house.

"They knew they had a home there any time they wanted to come. We were kind of country people. I remember one day after I was up in my teens, the Elders were making jokes about the bedbugs and things like 'the itch'. They used to have a saying among the missionaries that they never made a good missionary until they had the itch, been eaten by bedbugs all night. They used to tell us we had one of the best places for them to stay in the state of Florida. They were always welcome even before my father and mother joined the Church.

"During the early days of the Church in Florida there was an uneasiness among people," Woody said, explaining that they were thought of as a minority group.

"Back in those days when we saw another member of the Church, it didn't make any difference how busy we were, even if we had to we would cross the street to visit

with them and shake their hand because we knew we were welcome with each other. The prejudice was terrible. We were referred to in that day as 'those old East End Mormons' or 'East End crackers'.

"People, even our kin that were not members, would not talk with us about religion in any way, shape or form. We learned early just to leave the Church out of it."

William Tilton, Woody's father, was a man of means in the community. He gave jobs to people whose livelihoods depended on him.

"Even so, I could feel as a child a certain feeling there where I was with the other children. They resented it, but they didn't dare resent it out loud because of the economic situation. After the Depression some of those people that my father fed and took care of when they couldn't get food or clothing any other way, didn't show appreciation for what was done for them."

It was during the great Depression that Woody was first sent on a 'short term' mission for an unspecified length of time to southwest Florida under President Callis. In their area there were six missionaries and a district president, and Woody and his companion covered a third of the state.

"I was 17 years old and had just graduated from high school and the year was 1933," he said. "Our main job at that time was to try and keep in touch and administer the sacrament to the families as we came to them. They were scattered over the area that ran from Orlando to Fort Myers, about the center part of the state, going south from Orlando to the Gulf Coast and part of Lake County. I don't think I slept in the same bed twice as long as I was on my mission. We found one family near Lakeland that hadn't seen Elders for ten years. My companion and I set up the first home Sunday School in Winter Haven with a widow woman and her family. It later became the largest ward in that stake. We started Sunday Schools and home Sunday Schools in several of the other towns.

"I was out only 14 weeks the first time and baptized 16 people," he said. "I filled that mission as a priest, so I did the baptizing and my companion did the confirming."

Three years later he received a six months mission call in Florida, this time from Elder LeGrand Richards.

"I kept the mission rules with no violation in any way, shape or form, but it wasn't against the mission rules for me to look for the finest LDS girl in the state of Florida while I was out there."

And he found her the day he was released.

"I was sitting in the conference that afternoon and saw her singing in the choir at the conference meeting. I wasn't a very good salesman, as it took me four years to

convert her to me. I had quite a bit of competition since she was the best one in the state, and I mean the finest, in my opinion, in the state.”

The girl he had found was Vella Valentine who possessed a pioneer heritage in the Church. Her mother was a Tucker and connected to the Manning family. In Vella’s family there were six girls and one boy. She and Woody had five boys and a girl.

“Shortly after my second mission, in 1937, Elder Richards organized what I refer to as a stake in embryo here in the mission field. Brother James R. Boone was called as what was referred to as district president. He chose two counselors, and I was called as what was referred to as a high councilman. Later we were corrected strongly by Elder Charles A. Callis, that we were not high councilmen, but we were district councilmen. One of the district presidents, a full-time missionary, who we worked under, went back home and reported that he had set apart six high councilmen while he was out in the mission field. Elder Callis was in the conference, and when he got up, I understand that in no uncertain terms he ripped that Elder up one side and down the other and asked him if he didn’t know that nobody but a General Authority could set apart a high councilmen and high priest. So from then on, instead of being high councilmen, we were district councilmen.”

Woody served on that council for ten years travelling throughout the entire state. “I knew every member of the Church there was in the state almost by their first name, and was able to assist Brother Boone because he was new in Florida.”

“Almost without exception when it came time to call someone to a job Brother Boone, almost without exception, asked me what I thought and who I would recommend.

“In 1936 we almost had a one-man branch in Miami. Brother Neubeck, who was originally from Palatka, was a very strong, staunch member of the Church who carried on that work almost singlehandedly from the early ‘20’s under the direction of Elder Charles A. Callis and Elder LeGrand Richard. There were about 100 members in the whole Miami area, Ft. Lauderdale included. I’m proud to say that many members of our family went down there to serve the Church. One was a stake president, one a patriarch, another a bishop and others held many other responsible positions. More than 50 have gone on to serve missions around the world. Most of my father’s sons remained with the soil and the cattle, but some have gone into the dairy business away from the area. He taught us all to work.

“From the time my daddy was a kid, just a young fellow, he worked. When he was eight years old he could handle ten yoke of oxen and haul logs with them,

handle the log cart and so forth. He didn’t take time off to do much hunting and fishing, I can only remember a few times he went with me, but he let me off work to go. Daddy was a farmer when I was born. Irish potato farming was just developing in this area, and he was one of the pioneers in it. When I was born he had perhaps 150-200 acres of land that he farmed. Back then if a man invested a \$100 in an acre of potatoes, he could make over \$1,000 an acre. Daddy had a few cattle, which by 1925 had grown into a herd of a couple of hundred, that came from one old milk cow and a heifer calf from her. He was successful but we never coveted anything that our neighbors or our friends had. If we admired what they had, and it was mechanical or something, then we’d make our own. Most of the time we were the leaders in developing some of the farming implements and other farmers came to see it. That’s one sin we’ll never have to pay for. In fact, I have never asked a man to sell me his cattle or his land. They always came to us. All deals were on credit and there was never a note or contract or a mortgage made. It was strictly on the handshake in those days.

“In the 1930’s when the dipping came in, we hired a few people and Daddy and us boys personally dipped over 5,000 head of cattle. We had other cattle that we had other people hired to tend to for us. I expect we dipped a total of perhaps 10,000 head of cattle and we did the job sixteen months straight without a break. After the Depression people started buying up land and in order to maintain that many cattle we had to purchase land to stay in the cattle business. Before that it was open range and every man’s cow had his mark and roamed the range. We leased the grazing, hunting, and fishing rights on something like 300,000 acres, but before we began to fence and it was wide-open range so in all we leased thousands of acres of land. So we were in the cattle business and we boys knew how to work it.

“When the timber market began to pick up we began to let some of the range grow up in timber. Slash pine grows fast and before we realized it we almost had shaded our pasture and were in the timber business rather than the cattle business. We made sure there was enough open space left for the grass to grow for our cattle, but for the past 40 years we’ve been in the timber business as well as cattle. We don’t have any leased land any more and we have sold some of the 80,000 acres that we owned.

“My father was the only one to carry on the Tilton name in his family. His parents had eleven children and nine of them were girls. His brother Reginald Tilton, never married. Daddy and Mama had nine children, six of them boys so the Tilton name has gone on in this area and they have all joined the Church. Descendants of the



Tilton family have served here in San Mateo-Palatka district as bishops, high councilmen, and counselors in the bishopric, Relief Society presidents and so on. We've all watched the Church advance. There's people in this area who are now interested in this Church who at one time wouldn't even talk to me about it when I was younger. I think the example our family, who was just another country family, set for them in the business world has developed into one of the most respected families in this area and one of the largest. For example, if a man went into a store to get one of our checks cashed he never had a problem. People would say, 'You can cash a Tilton check anywhere in this country.' So we did gain their respect. Publicity out of Salt Lake such as the Tabernacle Choir helped a lot to start a conversation and now in this area it's becoming quite popular to be a Mormon rather than 'those old Mormons'.

"I don't want to give the impression that I'm proud or bragging or anything. I'm just humbly grateful that the Lord blessed me enough that I could do some of those things. I'll be eternally grateful to the Lord for his blessings, because I'll tell you, my testimony is that if you haven't got the Lord on your side, you've got a hard row to hoe, and it's not a very straight row at that. Me and the Lord can do anything we want to do, but Woody Tilton by himself couldn't do nothing. So the good things of life that I've had, I give the Lord credit for. Some of the bad things I give Him credit for too, but that was to make me stronger, and I appreciate it.

"I had one experience I've never forgotten that happened on my second mission. In a missionary testimony meeting we were asked to bear our testimony and relate some missionary experience. I never like to brag or boast so I got up when it came my time and said I didn't have any particular experience, but that I enjoyed my work, and sat down. The district president jumped up and said it had always been his experience that those who didn't have experiences to tell hadn't done anything. I had not wanted to boast. So after I became bishop I noticed that the meeting was not well attended and I had become concerned about it. I just bowed my head right there for about five minutes before the sacrament meeting and asked the Lord what I should do to inspire the people and build them up so that they would be anxiously serving in the ward. And immediately, I received an answer loud and clear. I didn't hear a voice, but I felt it say. 'Bishop, you get up there tonight at that pulpit and you warn these people that if they want to be a part of the Lord's Kingdom, if they want their descendants to be a part of it, they need to show more interest, go to work in the ward, answer their calls, and do as they should do. If they choose not to do it, the Lord will either convert more people to take their place or He will

move people into this area so that this work can go on.' And the message also said, 'Don't pull your punches. Tell them.' So I told them and with a great majority it worked. They went to work and are still working. Some didn't take the warning and today neither they nor their descendants are in the Church.

"I was just 18 when I returned from my first mission and held my first funeral by myself. I did the speaking and praying and all in this sister's home, where she'd lived for many years. She lived in Hastings and her name was Arnett. Since that time many of the funerals that I was responsible for I took care of alone because of a shortage of funeral speakers in the area and priesthood to help me. At this time it's close to 150 funerals that I've either held myself or participated in in some way."

The Tiltons were isolated from other units of the Church and as first bishop in the area the challenge was to keep the youth and members active. His home was always a hub for entertainment. There were dances, parties, choirs, and choruses organized to interest the people.

"My wife was a pianist and good at leading music. She spent many hours with the girls particularly, and we gave them all we could give them. Back in 1933 the little San Mateo Branch started celebrating the Twenty-fourth of July along with the other Saints. I remember it was held the day before I left to serve my first mission. We have kept that up annually and it has grown to where we were putting on all amateur, but as good as professional, rodeos. Members came from 100 miles and further to attend, and ten times as many non-members would come. We did all we could to plug the Church. Everyone brought a basket lunch, and in the morning we had a program in the chapel relating to the Saints getting into the Salt Lake Valley. After lunch we'd rodeo most of the afternoon until dark. A time or two we had lights and would put on pageants at night with covered wagons and had a reader to read and explain the scenes. It grew into a crowd of several thousands."

For many years the Tilton family furnished the beef, preparing it in large iron pots before putting it on the pit for barbecue to feed the large crowds.

Before the chapel in San Mateo was built, the area Saints met in homes. After the chapel was constructed, it would seat about 100 people. There were no classrooms, but they were very happy to have that," Woody explained.

"We went into the four corners to have our Sunday School lessons," he said.

"The chapel was dedicated March 4, 1928, by Elder Charles A. Callis, Southern States Mission President, who hesitated in the middle of his sermon that day and told those gathered, 'As I look out across the road, I can

see temple spires sitting there'. After the chapel was built, the Saints had a central place to meet. Before we were made into a ward, sometime in the early 40's, my daddy was the district councilmen working with the Palatka Branch. He helped them arrange to buy a small chapel in Palatka, and for the first time they had a building of their own to meet in. And we later used that chapel as a ward chapel. In 1947 after the Florida Stake was organized, the San Mateo and Palatka branches were combined and made a ward. I was called as the first bishop. We used the chapel in San Mateo as the recreation hall and used the one in Palatka for the other meetings. It worked pretty nice.

"Today I could go to any man in this county and he won't turn and walk away from me when I mention church. Most of them are eager to listen, but a lot of them are not yet ready to listen enough to be converted."

For a while Woody, in connection with the Protestant ministers of the local Ministerial Alliance, gave fifteen-minute live talks over the local radio station. One morning he used a portion of James E. Talmage's talk. After his talk he went to the local bank where he had an appointment with the bank's president who was a non-member.

"Before I had a chance to say anything, he said, 'Bishop,' and he had never called me bishop before, he said, 'Bishop, I listened to your talk this morning coming to work, and that was one of the finest sermons I've ever heard.'

"I've reached the age in years, seniority in life, that I don't cull my words as much as before. I used to when I was a young man because I was a little timid. But these older men, highly respected business and professional, I don't care who they are any more. If I can get an opportunity to mention the Church to them, I talk Church to them. If they don't appear too interested, I wind up by saying to them, 'Mr. So and So, the Mormon Church has got something valuable in it. I would advise you to check into it,' and let it go, just like that. You leave them with a seed in their mind.

"My experiences as a county commissioner for 18 years gave me lots of opportunities to put the Church out front. I was known as 'that Mormon' that wouldn't approve a certain liquor license for them. The other commissioners never went against my wishes in that respect.

"One night I was invited to a cocktail party, politically inspired, where they were serving alcoholic beverages. When I was offered a drink I said, 'No thank you,' and the mayor of Palatka was standing about ten feet from me, and he saw what was taking place. He walked over and said, 'Woody doesn't partake of those things at all, but I'll take his part.' After that I was offered a gin-

gerale or something else to drink. Maybe that taught them a little about the gospel. You never know what end result those things will have."

Woody also got to know state officials, and because he put in a full day's work the full week, for \$50 a month they quickly learned he was a man who got the job done and with integrity and dedication. He served the county in this capacity from 1942 until 1960. In serving the county more than his own business he decided not to seek another term, but put more time into his personal life and business. When many people begged him to continue, he told them he would, but only if they would work on his campaign as he did not have the time to do it. His business was suffering.

"The end result was that they were so sure I was going to be re-elected that they didn't do anything either, so I was beat by 23 votes. That's nothing to be ashamed of. Had I spent one hour, I could have gotten that many votes, but as it was I didn't let the people down, and I don't think I can honestly say they let me down because that's what I wanted anyhow.

"I was released about four years before that as bishop in the latter part of 1956. In the meantime I had been serving a dual job as I was also serving as high councilman. During the whole time of my bishopric I had served as the stake welfare man in charge of the welfare. I served on the high council seven more years, which with the ten years under Brother Boone as district president gave me seventeen years as a high councilman, nine years as a bishop, and before that I had served as branch president, Sunday School superintendent, MIA president. You name it, I've done it.

"Now I'm going to give you a little testimony right here. When I got released from the high council, I had gotten interested in some things in South America and I couldn't be at all my meetings and attend to my duties as I should. I neglected my Church work when I got busy in business, and as I neglected my Church work, my wealth began to dwindle. Just as easy as slipping off a greased log the things that I had accumulated, which was valued up in the millions, most of it just slipped away from me. So maybe I wasn't living right.

"Before I went on that first mission, I read in sixth chapter of Matthew. At the end of the chapter it says something to this effect: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things,' meaning what they had referred to in the previous part of the chapter, 'will be added up to you.' I came out of high school at the bottom of the Depression and I didn't have money enough to get a haircut, and that wasn't but thirty-five cents. I debated a little bit whether I wanted to work or go on that mission. My parents were willing to send me, but they didn't have any more money than I



did. I stayed out there for \$5 a week, which bought gasoline also for our travel in that big territory. I made a covenant with the Lord that I would accept that call, but I did want some of the good things of this world, and if those things would be added unto me, I'd like to go on that mission. I wasn't demanding of the Lord that He do that, but I more or less expected that. As long as I served the Lord, as long as His work came before mine, everything I touched turned to gold.

"But when I got interested in other things...in fact, I even owned an international airline out of South American and flew under the Peruvian flag into the United States with it, ...I wasn't attending Church, and couldn't, traveling as I was. Oh, I attended Church in South America. I attended the first sacrament meeting, Sunday School, and MIA held in the city of Iquitos (Peru). There were about ten people there in the late 60's. I sent baseball and softball equipment down there to those people on the airline, gathered it up here in the ward so the missionaries could use it as a tool to attract the young people. I was there when the first two missionaries came into that town, perhaps the first two after the gospel was taken from the Nephites. I feel that in that particular area of the South American jungle, I feel that I attended the first official meeting of the Lord's Church after 1,000 years. Today they've got a stake there. But anyhow, when I started going to South America I got word through the stake president that one of the Twelve Apostles wanted to meet me in Orlando. He inadvertently let the job slip that they wanted me to do. It was to be over the welfare work of the five Southeastern states. Well, I had an appointment in South America, and I just felt like I couldn't miss it, so I went to South America. I didn't tell the Lord no, but I guess what I told Him was that I was busy today and I'd get back with Him. Things are not as good financially today as they were then, and I know why. I well know

why. So, if you want to prosper in this world, as a member of the Church, you'd better serve the Lord.

"I told that story to my lawyer, to my druggist, and to a business associate at a dinner we had one night, just the four of us. One of my sons, John, was also with me. I was wanting to borrow some money and when they asked me why I needed the money, I told them that story. The lawyer spoke up and said, 'Well, that hadn't ought to have had any effect.' But the businessman spoke up immediately, before I answered, and said, 'You don't understand. The Lord expects more of him than He does of us.' And it is so true."

Like many other colossal men in the Church, circumstances in Woody's life affected his activity in the Church, but he never lost his testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel.

"I haven't quit the Church. My testimony is strong, as strong as it's ever been. There's no question in my mind about the prophet being a prophet of the Lord. He is the mouthpiece and this is the true Church, the only true Church on the face of the earth. Those things I know, and I hope nothing can ever take that away from me," he stated.

That Woody Tilton acknowledged his love of the Church, his Heavenly Father and the Savior many times, it was never more forcefully as he did at the end of his journey in life. Until his death, he was still considered a big man, who did a big job. His strength and energy for the gospel will always be remembered in a vital way by those who knew him best and by the record he left behind for those who follow in his giant footsteps.



*The Ranch Home at Rodman of Woodrow and Vella Valentine Tilton  
1954-1983*

# TURKNETT/ATKINSON FAMILY

By Florence Elizabeth Jammes  
Duval County Florida

“My maternal grandparents, James Elliott and Lougenia Wilford Turknnett were among the first converts in Jacksonville to accept the gospel. Grandfather was baptized September 1, 1898, and Grandmother October 17, 1898. The missionaries didn't come through the area where they lived very often. On this particular day, Grandpa was in the field plowing corn and the missionaries waited until he came back from the end of the row, introduced themselves and gave him some pamphlets. Grandpa later said that he knew what they had told him, and what he read in the pamphlets, was true, but he was not quite ready to be baptized. Grandma began attending Church. One morning after taking her to Church in the horse and wagon, he came home and hitched the horse to a post to await the time to go back and get her. Instead he was so restless he couldn't get the horse untied quick enough and be on his way back to the Church to ask for baptism.

“Grandfather was a man of integrity. One thing he would say to us was, “Never be in a hurry, but always be on time.” He told us his hair turned completely white at the age of 17, so we always knew him with beautiful snow white hair. He was of average stature and lived to be nearly eighty-four years of age. About two years before he died on March 24, 1944, he couldn't see any possibility of getting to the temple and asked if I would see that his temple ordinances were done after he was gone. I promised him I would. He gave me names, dates, and places of events, all he could remember. I did further research and had him sealed to his family by proxy. There was a satisfying feeling of worthy accomplishment when the record from Salt Lake Temple was received stating all ordinances and sealings had been completed.

“Grandmother was part Indian. She was rather quiet. She loved her grandchildren and did things for us. She died at age 82.

“My mother, Hattie Catherine Atkinson was baptized June 15, 1913, in Jacksonville with several other members of her extended family. At the age of 91, Mother received her endowments in the Atlanta Temple and while there was sealed to my deceased father and their six children. Two of the children were deceased. At the temple I was asked if Mother needed a wheel chair, but I told them that she could out walk any of us. Mama was always energetic, almost to her death, which lacked three months of being ninety-eight.

“Mother had to learn to cook, keep house and attend four younger children when she was very young. When

she was eleven-years-old these responsibilities were left with her one day when her mother was gone from home. The missionaries came by that day and Mama felt like she needed to feed them. She went to the field where they had peas planted and found sixteen quail in the trap. Mama dug under the side of the trap, took them out one by one, wrung their neck, picked the feathers off and singed them by hold burning paper over each bird. (This was done to remove the fine feathers.) Then Mama washed and cooked the quail. She also cooked biscuits, rice and sliced some tomatoes. She told us she didn't think about the missionaries not liking her cooking or the kind of food she served. She knew it was something to eat and they would probably be glad to get it. Mama said the missionaries showed much appreciation.

“The Elders didn't know how to chew sugar cane so Mama showed them how to peel and cut it and left them alone on the front porch reading their scriptures while she went to the field, picked peas and butter-beans and had supper cooked by the time her mother returned home.

“Mother taught and set an example to her children, the joy of work well done. She said, “If a task is once begun, never leave it 'til it's done, be the labor great or small, do it well or not at all”. Mother had every virtue anyone could hope for. Everyone loved her. She was loved, honored, and respected by each of her grandchildren.

“My father, John Wright Atkinson, was not a member of any church. He asked Mama why she thought the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the true church. She told him because the teachings were the same as Jesus Christ taught.

“When Father became ill with pneumonia, he told Mama he knew he wasn't going to live, but if the Lord wanted him to remain a while longer he was willing and would be baptized, and if not, the ordinances could be done vicariously for him in the temple. Daddy wanted to talk with one of the Elders in the Church about this and did so with Elder Steed. That same week, January 22, 1929, Daddy died at the age of 43. His baptism and endowments were done by proxy May of 1932 in the Salt Lake Temple. Sometime shortly before Daddy died, I think he saw beyond the veil. He told Mama he was ready to go and was happy. He said that everything was beautiful, the only thing he regretted, he said he wished we could go with him, but said he knew that was impossible. Mama was expecting their sixth child in June. Sitting by his side, wiping tears from her eyes, Daddy said to her, “God will wipe away all tears”. That was some comfort to Mama to hear him say these positive things. Mama said when praying she never received an



answer that he would get well, so she then asked the Lord if it would be pleasing to Him would He continue to bless daddy to be contented with whatever his lot may be. Mama said her prayers were answered because he surely seemed at peace until death. I was nine-years-old and was rubbing his forehead when he told me to 'be a good girl and mind Mama'.

"Daddy was of large stature, black hair, brown eyes. He worked hard for his family he loved. As a young adult he was a barber, later farmed a small area, was a carpenter, cut wood with a hand saw and ax and sold by the wagon load what we didn't need to burn in our heater. On a cold rainy day in January, cutting wood to keep us warm, he took ill and died within a week."

Note: Sister Jammes and her husband William H Jammes. were among the original 50 members when the Wesconnett Sunday School was organized in Duval County in 1936. She has contributed her memoirs of this event in another section of this book.

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# FLORIDA MORMON PIONEER

## MANNING/FRENCH/TUCKER/ VALENTINE FAMILIES

*The following sketches have been compiled, and photos contributed, by Vella Valentine Tilton of San Mateo, Florida, a descendent of these MORMON PIONEERS.*

### FIRST GENERATION

## EDNA JANE ELIZABETH PARROTT MANNING

1836–1918



*Edna Jane  
Elizabeth  
Parrott Manning*

Jane Elizabeth was born April 4, 1836, in Wayne County, Georgia, the oldest daughter of John and Fatima (Mittie) Gibson Parrott.

She married George Washington Manning on December 18, 1853. He was born on December 19, 1827, to Joseph Jackson and Dolly Rozier Manning.

Jane, a tall woman, was strong and hardy, requisites for survival as she lived on the Georgia and Florida frontier. She gave birth to nine children under primitive conditions. One of her sons was buried at six years of age. Her husband enlisted in the Confederate Army and was away for two years while she cared for their home and family. He died April 3, 1889, leaving her a widow at age 53.

When the Florida Conference was created November 1, 1895, missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began traveling through Columbia county teaching the gospel. Jane listened and believed. She and a son, Dan, were baptized at Sanderson, April 5, 1897. She was baptized by Elder John Watts and confirmed by Elder Chris J. Brown.

Jane died a faithful Mormon pioneer June 9, 1918, while living in Starke with her son, Calvin, and his family. She is buried in South Prong Cemetery, south of Sanderson in Baker County, Florida.

### SECOND GENERATION



*Isaac Josiah Tucker Family  
circa 1898, Columbia County, Florida*

Standing, left to right: Janie Elizabeth (Aunt Janie), Andrew Miller (Uncle Ander), Isaac Josiah, Jr. (Uncle Joe), Rosa Vella (Aunt Vella), Alvie Calhoun (Uncle Al).

Seated, left to right: Isaac Josiah, Sr., holding Carrie Della, Henrietta French Manning holding William Walter (Uncle Will)

## HENRIETTA FRENCH MANNING TUCKER

1855–1913

On the first day of November in 1895, the Florida Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ was organized and missionary work began in earnest in the north Florida pine woods.

As the missionaries traveled the countryside in Columbia County, Florida, they came to a log home on the banks of Deep Creek where Isaac and Henrietta Tucker lived with their six children. (A seventh child arrived later.) Henrietta recognized the message they brought to be true. She was baptized on August 27, 1896, by Samuel Isom, a missionary from Mountain Dell, Utah, and through careful research in the Church archives, thought to be the seventh person in Columbia County to join the Church. She was a true pioneer.

Henrietta was a small, petite lady with lots of courage and compassion. She had great love for her family and others. Her daughter Carrie said she had seen her mother take food off her own plate and give it to her



children for fear they were not getting enough.

When the Tucker family moved to Baker County, seven miles south of Sanderson, their small herd of cattle kept straying trying to find their way back to the old home place. Henrietta sold enough of them to buy a sewing machine so she could sew clothing for her family and others. When a child died in the community, Henrietta always sewed burial clothes for it. She lived the gospel and taught her family correct principles and lived the example as a true Mormon pioneer.

### *THIRD GENERATION*

## **CARRIE DELLA TUCKER VALENTINE**

1895–1964



*Carrie Della Tucker Valentine*

Carrie Tucker was born on October 26, 1895, in a typical north Florida pioneer log home that was located eleven miles north of Lake City in Columbia County, Florida. Six days later, on November 1, the Florida Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was established.

The following year, on August 27, 1896, Carrie's mother, Henrietta, was baptized at Palmetto in Columbia County. Carrie's grandmother, Edna Jane Elizabeth. Parrott Manning was baptized at Sanderson in Baker County on April 5, 1897. When Carrie was baptized on May 26, 1907, she became the 3rd generation Mormon in North Florida.

When Carrie was three years old, the family moved from their log home in Columbia County to seven miles south of Sanderson in Baker County where they farmed. At six years of age Carrie was helping on the farm by thinning cotton, picking cotton and suckering corn. In her journal Carrie wrote

the following, "I also did what was called suckering corn."

While living in Baker County, the children had to walk three miles to attend school. When Carrie was eight years old she moved with her family to Starke in Bradford County.

On May 26, 1907, Carrie was baptized and officially became a member of the Church and remained a loyal and faithful member all the days of her life.

In 1910 Carrie's family made one more move, this time to Jacksonville where she met John Thomas Valentine. The couple, she was 16 and he was 27, married on June 26, 1912, and became the parents of six daughters and one son.

Carrie was very personable and had many friends. She held many church callings and participated in all church activities. In those days the families enjoyed box suppers and auctions. The ladies would put food for two in a box, usually a shoe box, and wrap it attractively with crepe paper and decorate it elaborately with flowers, ribbons and bows. The men would bid on the box and the winner would share the contents with the lady who prepared it.

Carrie served as Stake Primary President and was loved dearly by the Board. She was widowed at age 39. Twelve years later she met and married Lawrence E. Burman. Although he was not a member of the Church, he assisted her in all of her church duties. Later he joined the Church and the two served together as Stake missionaries.

Carrie's love of life was evident to all who knew her. She was happy and vivacious. Many times she would take the hands of her little grandchildren and dance with them. She loved bright clothes, red petticoats and squaw



**Children of John Thomas and Carrie Tucker Valentine  
A Valentine Bouquet**

*Clockwise, from top left: Garnetta, Vella, Clara, Betty, Iris, Lois, and Johnny in center*



dresses. She was an exceptional cook and her family especially loved her chicken and dumplings, sweet potato pone, and Lady Baltimore cake. She often entertained the missionaries at her table.

The example Carrie set as a faithful follower of Christ, and His teachings will live forever in the hearts of her family. Today a multitude of her descendants serve in offices and callings throughout the Church. Carrie died on October 7, 1964, and is buried in West Evergreen Cemetery in Jacksonville, Florida.



#### **FOUR GENERATIONS OF FLORIDA MORMONS**

Left to Right: Jane Elizabeth Parrott Manning – Born April 4, 1836, Baptized April 5, 1897, Died June 9, 1918; Henrietta French Manning Tucker – Born Dec. 20, 1855, Baptized Aug. 27, 1896, Died Feb. 22, 1913; Rosa Vella Tucker Stacy – Born July 30, 1890, Baptized June 24, 1900, Died July 20, 1965; Pearl Stacy – Born Feb. 11, 1910, Baptized Sept 30, 1918, Died Sept. 13, 1983

## **ISAAC JOSIAH TUCKER**

1860–1915



**Isaac Josiah Tucker**

Isaac was one of eight children born in Duval County to Willoughby E. and Caroline Elizabeth

Reddick Tucker. The family later moved to Keysville, Florida, where they lived. Isaac moved to Columbia County.

Isaac first married Naomi Beal, also known as Victoria, in 1879 in Columbia County. She died the following year.

On September 8, 1881, he married Henrietta French Manning. The couple lived in a log home on the banks of Deep Creek, in a Columbia County community called Palmetto.

Between 1883 and 1897 Henrietta gave birth to seven children. They were a happy family. They worked together inside their home and on the farm raising corn, cotton, peanuts and a vegetable garden. They had hogs, chickens and cattle. Occasionally Isaac would walk 11 miles into Lake City for the supplies his family needed such as salt bacon to season the vegetables, corn meal and flour. He carried his purchases home in a croaker sack slung over his shoulder.

In 1898 the family left their log cabin home and moved to Baker County seven miles south of Sanderson. Now they had transportation: a two-wheeled cart and a horse named Old Deck to pull it. With the cart they now could ride the seven miles into Sanderson to attend Church.

On one trip to visit Henrietta's brother, Calvin Manning in Starke, Old Deck went down into a deep ditch breaking the belly-girt and causing the cart to slide into the ditch. Henrietta was a sweet and mild mannered lady, but her daughter, Carrie, said this is one time her mother became angry with her father. As she and the children were spilled into the ditch, Isaac, who was walking along side Old Deck began laughing at the sight of his family tumbling out of the cart. His humor was not appreciated by Henrietta.

Isaac, a large, broad shouldered man was not ready for baptism when Henrietta accepted the gospel in 1896. After their move to Baker County he made the commitment and was baptized by Elder Orson Wilkins of Nutrioso, Arizona, June 15, 1900. His home was always opened to the missionaries where they were made to feel welcome. Elder Samuel Isom, an LDS missionary from Utah, recorded in his journal on Dec. 16, 1897: "We went on to Palmetto and held a meeting at the home of I.J. Tucker."

Isaac was a good neighbor. When a child in the community died, he made the coffin in which it was buried.

This faithful, pioneer Latter-day Saint died at the home of his daughter and son-in-law, Carrie and John Valentine on August 31, 1915. He is buried in South Prong Cemetery south of Sanderson, in Baker County.



# JOHN THOMAS VALENTINE

1884-1935



**John Thomas Valentine**

John Thomas Valentine was born December 28, 1884, in Jena, Lafayette County, Florida, the oldest child of William Edward Valentine and Beulah Van Pridgeon. His father died when he was only 17 years old.

John had not heard about Mormonism when he was growing up. His father was a Baptist deacon and most likely attended this church in his youth. His faith, even as a lad, was strong and his daughter, Vella, heard him relate faith promoting stories of his life on many occasions. He often told her about the time he carried the mail on horseback from Cross City to Perry overnight. One day as he was on his way, he saw a storm coming towards him. It must have been a tornado she said, for it was up-rooting and twisting up large trees in its path. He told her he stopped and offered up a prayer for protection and just before it reached him it turned, circled around him and went on its way. Each time he related this incident to his family he would end by saying, "Some people would say it just happened that way, but I know different. I know my prayer was answered."

John's vocations were many. According to his brother William 'Bill' David Valentine, John did some commercial fishing while he lived near the Steinhatchee River

and Gulf of Mexico. He went to Fort Myers and worked in the orange groves. For a while he was employed at a sawmill in Brooksville where his mother ran a boarding house after she was widowed. Then John and Bill decided to seek employment in St. Augustine at Florida East Coast Railway. A year later John left to move to Jacksonville and went to work with the Seaboard Airline Railway where he eventually became foreman of the planing mill. Bill stayed a few more years and eventually joined John in Jacksonville.

After John moved to Jacksonville he met Carrie Della Tucker, a Latter-day Saint. He fell in love with her sweet and natural ways and they were married June 26, 1912. In Carrie's journal she recorded, "In 1910 my family moved from Starke to Jacksonville. About a year later I met the young man John Thomas Valentine, whom I married June 26, 1912." As the missionaries visited in their home, John's interest grew and soon he was taking a Book of Mormon with him to work to read on his lunch hour. He thought the more he learned, the more he could confound them, but as he read the Spirit revealed to him the truthfulness of the words and the divine mission it held. He was baptized on January 23, 1919.

After his baptism, John became a true 'trailblazer'. Although his untimely death 16 years later gave him only a limited span in Church membership, his dedication to strengthening the Church in the area and building up the Kingdom of God on earth was unexcelled. He was a faithful and devoted Saint. When his baptism became known among his co-workers at the Seaboard Airline Railway, he took some pretty rough teasing. Co-workers would call out to him, "Hey Valentine, how many wives you got?" He would reply, "All I want. One!"

The family lived across town a good distance from the first LDS Church which was located at the corners of Claude and Short Streets. Each Sunday morning John would walk a mile to catch the street car and ride across town to attend Church. After the meeting he and the missionaries would ride the streetcar back to his home on Sloan Street near Talleyrand Avenue. Then after dinner members who lived in the area would gather at his home, along with his family, for Church services.

On assignment John would sometimes visit homes in the Springfield section and hold cottage meetings. His daughter Vella remembers when she was about 14 years old going with him to the home of Brother and Sister Charlie Collins and Mattie Rebecca McLain O'Neal. "Daddy had asked me to prepare a talk. He had also asked Russell Zetterower to talk. He asked Russell to speak first. I had prepared a talk on 'Faith'. Russell must have read the same book I had for he gave my talk almost word for word. That was the only talk I knew so



when Daddy called on me I stood up and gave my talk just as Russell had.”

That didn’t deter John from taking his daughter on other trips. He made many trips to Doctor’s Inlet during mid-week to hold services and Vella went along with him. She remembers one special time when they went for a social and auction to raise money for the small branch. “The members had contributed items for the auction,” she said. “Daddy bid on, and got six cut-glass goblets that were contributed by Brother and Sister A.O. Jenkins who owned Duval Jewelry Store in Jacksonville. We were so proud of them, for they were the nicest dishes we had ever owned. Through the years they were broken, one by one, by me. When there was only one goblet left, Mama presented it to me saying, ‘Vella can have this, she broke all the others.’ Believe it or not now, some sixty years later, I still have that one goblet, a reminder of days gone by.”

When Charles A. Callis, President of the Southern States Mission would come to Florida District, he would often call on John to drive him to outlying branches such as Lake City, San Mateo, Sanderson and others. John was only too happy to do it.

In the April 20, 1926 issue of the Liahona Elder’s Journal, the following was recorded.

“As the Jacksonville Chapel nears completion, a gen-

eral awakening and revival of spirit is prevalent among both Saints and friends. Under the presidency of Bishop Worley and his counselors, John T. Valentine and Otho Starling, and with the able support of the ward teachers, much good is being accomplished in the branch.”

One of the most faith-promoting stories remembered by John’s daughter Vella, is the following.

“When Daddy was about 40 years old, he became very ill with double pneumonia. The doctor came to our little home in the pine woods many times. Finally he said to Mama, ‘Mrs. Valentine, there is nothing more I can do.’ Mama always had so much faith. She didn’t sit and wring her hands. She sent immediately for the missionary Elders. They came and administered to Daddy. One of them was Alonzo A. Hinckley. He turned to Mama and said, ‘Don’t worry, Sister Valentine. He will be alright.’ Daddy was soon up after that and back at work. I believe this incident, which happened when I was only six-years-old, was the beginning of my testimony as to faith and power of the Priesthood. My father was a true Mormon pioneer and a faithful Latter-day Saint. He was a good husband and good father to his seven children although he was called upon to leave when we were all still young. I am very proud and grateful to be his daughter.”

## VELLA BEULAH VALENTINE TILTON

1918–

### *FOURTH GENERATION FLORIDA PIONEER LATTER-DAY SAINT*

*There is absolutely no one who takes greater pride in being a fourth-generation Latter-day Saint in Florida than Vella Tilton. She descends from the very earliest, and most devout and prominent Mormon pioneers in the state. She has never missed a beat of their footsteps in continuing to build up the Kingdom of God in the South. She, along with her ancestors, and those of her husband Woody Tilton’s family, are the most loyal and steadfast among the southern LDS Trailblazers. Their stories, contributed by Vella, appear in this, and the Tilton family sections. No one appreciates their heritage more than Vella Valentine Tilton. She has kept voluminous records, and can relate endless stories of the faith, fortitude, service, sacrifice and courage of the earliest southern Saints in which tremendous sacrifice ‘for the building of Zion in the latter days’ was simply a way of life. “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” shall surely be her reward. This is her story, in her words, taken from a 1991 oral interview with Chad M. Orton of the Church Historical Department through the James Moyle Oral History Program, and through personal interviews*



**John and Carrie Valentine and their three eldest children: Clara (baby), Vella (left) and Garnetta (right).**



*with this book's compiler, as well.*

Before the turn of the century, Columbia County Florida, located in the Suwannee River region of North Florida, was the crossroads of travel in Florida. New railroads increased its importance as a transportation center. Steamboats connected Cedar Key with the southern part of the county as they operated up the Suwannee and into the Santa Fe River. Highways and by-ways were little more than graded trails connecting the county's communities. By 1895, when it is known that Mormon missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints entered the area, many churches of varying faiths had been established. However, many of the primitive structures fell prey to a devastating hurricane in 1896 and were destroyed. Circuit riders were not daunted, neither were the LDS missionaries, mostly from the West, who entered the piney-woods of the Southern States Mission and served in this area of north Florida.

Vella Valentine Tilton's maternal grandmother, Henrietta French Manning Tucker, was living along the banks of Deep Creek, eleven miles north of Lake City, with her husband Isaac Josiah and six of their seven children when the Mormon Elders tracked the area. (Called tracking in those years because Elders walked from place to place giving out pamphlets they called tracts).

Records indicate she was the seventh person in Columbia County to become a Latter-day Saint. She was baptized on August 27, 1896, by Elder Samuel Isom. Her daughter Carrie and her brothers and sisters were blessed by Elder Samuel Isom on October 26 of that year.

The Tuckers moved from Columbia County into neighboring Baker County a few years later and it was there on June 15, 1900, that Isaac Tucker joined the Church. Henrietta's two older sisters, Janie and Vella also joined; Janie on June 15 and Vella June 24. Carrie, not quite old enough, was baptized May 26, 1907, after the family had moved to Starke in Bradford County.

In Starke, the Manning family formed the nucleus around which the Mormon Church was established in that county. Henrietta's brother, John Calvin Manning, and his wife, Ordalia Cordelia Thornton, known as 'Aunt Della' were baptized May 25, 1905. They owned a store and were prosperous for those times. The couple had nine children and all were baptized into the Church except for their youngest who died when only a few months old.

"In 1910 my grandparents, Isaac and Henrietta moved to Jacksonville, Duval County, where they could make a better living, but Henrietta died in 1913 and Isaac in 1915," said Vella. "They are buried in South

Prong Cemetery a few miles south of Sanderson. Their children, and many of their descendants have served missions and many important callings in the Church. One of their sons, Alvie, became bishop in Jacksonville. As a child Uncle Alvie had not been baptized. He married, had a family, and then was told his wife Eunice had cancer. In those days there was no cancer center to treat it in this area, and they wanted her to go to New York City for treatments. My Aunt Vella talked them into having the Elders administer to her. They did, and when they went to New York, the specialist checked her and could find no sign of cancer. When they came back to Jacksonville they said, 'Well, if that's what the Church can do, we want to know more about it.' They were baptized and in a few years Uncle Al was bishop of the Jacksonville Ward.

"My mother met my father, John Thomas Valentine, and they were married June 26, 1912. Just as they were going to give up having their own child, and consider adoption, my mother became pregnant and in 1916 she had her first child, Carrie Garnetta. Within the next two-and-a-half years my parents moved a few miles west of Jacksonville to Marietta. It was just a little spot in the highway then and our house was way out in the woods. Daddy always teased me that I was born in a frog pond when I arrived August 8, 1918. I arrived early, before Daddy could find the doctor, so Mama's sister, Vella Tucker Stacy, delivered me. When the doctor finally arrived all he did was change the string Aunt Vella had tied when she cut the umbilical cord, and still charged Mama \$50. My mama was indignant all of her life about that, but I really think I was worth it. In fact, the trait of arriving early has stayed with me all my life. No matter where we went, or where I go now, I always want to get there early.

"We had many faith-promoting stories in our family, and one is especially close to my heart. Daddy still hadn't been baptized, but on January 23, 1919, three things happened that was wonderful. My sister Garnetta had been very sick for three days. She wouldn't eat. My parents sent for the doctor, and when he came he said she had pneumonia. Mama had such faith that she asked Daddy to ride his bicycle into Jacksonville to the mission home and get a taxi and bring the Elders to administer to my sister. Mama wrote in her journal the following. "I knew of a surety she would be all right if I could only get them to come and administer to her. John didn't want to leave me alone. I told him I wouldn't be alone for God the Father would be with me. My faith was so strong that I knew everything would be all right if only I could get the Elders to come out, so he did. He rode to the mission home and found the Elders still there. They said all morning they were supposed to have gone out,

but something seemed to stop them each time. My husband called a taxi, and left his bicycle at the mission home. When the Elders administered to Garnetta, she fell softly to sleep.

“While the Elders were there they blessed me, and this is continuing from Mama’s journal. ‘My husband spoke of the fact that he had often thought he would be baptized but had just put it off. So Elder W.A. Hall and Elder Rulon Ostler said, ‘Well, why not be baptized today?’ Once again he said he didn’t want to leave me alone, and I told him there was no fear in my heart, that if he wanted to go be baptized I would be all right, also the children. So he got his clothes. We had expected him to have to go into Phoenix Park, which would put him about midnight getting home. I still had no fear in my heart. I was just too happy, for I knew my child was healed and that my husband would be one at heart with me after his baptism. About an hour had passed and Garnetta was sleeping sweetly. I looked down the road and saw someone coming along, walking slowly, and swinging a stick. It was my husband. He told me that they had stopped at Cracker Swamp and the Elders tested the water to see if it was deep enough. Finding it all right, they went ahead and performed the baptism right there.’

“My sister was healed. She awoke and ate two oranges. My mama truly had the faith.

“Mama said it was very lonesome in the country with the nearest neighbor a mile away, so before their next little girl Clara was born, they moved back to Jacksonville. Daddy built us a home next to his mother, Beulah Van Pridgeon Valentine.

“Daddy used to ride the streetcar to Church with Garnetta every Sunday which was across town. He’d always bring the Elders back with him and they would eat dinner with us, then hold church services in our home with other members in our area.



**Elders and Lady Missionaries at John and Carrie Valentine home for Sunday School, Springfield Area, Jacksonville, FL 1921**

“By 1922 or 23, a frame building was built over on our side of town on East 23rd Street. It was next to the home of Brother Nathan Smith and his wife Bessie. Brother and Sister Charles and Lucy Tilton Zetterower lived across the street. This was sort of a nucleus, where Nathan and Bessie Smith, John and Carrie Valentine, Archie and Josephine Jenkins and others on our side of town would attend Sunday School which was only held on Sunday mornings.

“That’s where I got my first activity in Church. Back then, before the sacrament, they always had a small child get up and say a Sacrament Gem. Then the members would all repeat it after them. Then they would have the sacrament prayers. Though I was small, I took my turn memorizing the little Sacrament Gems and saying it when I was asked to.

“When I was seven years old we moved from



**Sunday School at home of John and Carrie Valentine, Springfield Area, Jacksonville, FL 1921**

Springfield, where we lived on Sloan Street, and Daddy built us a home in the Riverside area. A large beautiful

brick building had been built on the corner of Park and Copeland Streets, so they were not using the wooden church on Claude and Short Streets anymore. There was a small home behind the big church where they had held Sunday School. The missionaries had stayed there sometimes. Daddy arranged for us to live in this home while our home was being built.

“The church was finished and dedicated in 1925 and I was baptized there on my eighth birthday the next year by Elder Jesse Baker. My father confirmed me a member of the Church.

In expressing her gratitude for this important occasion, she stated:

“All my life I have loved the Lord. I’ve loved His Church and cherished the power of the



priesthood. Our lives circled around the Church at Park and Copeland. That is where I was baptized, gave my first two-and-a-half minute talk. A missionary wrote me a short talk on slander. I memorized it and stood behind the big pulpit in that big chapel before that large congregation. I've given many more since, but I've never forgotten that first talk. The first floor in the church was a basement. When I became twelve, I was old enough to go to MIA. Oh, how I enjoyed the classes. We learned so many things and were taught how to dance after MIA every week....the fox trot, waltz, tango, mixers.

"Actually I didn't learn the tango until after Woody and I were married and we went to June conference in Salt Lake City. Brother Carlos Starling, who was one of the members that had gone out for the conference, arranged with W.O. Robinson who was the dance supervisor for the Church to teach us dance steps. There were about seven or eight of the members from our district that received instruction so we could come back and teach others, which we did. We were taught speech and drama. Every Tuesday night one of the MIA classes would put on a little play, just fifteen minutes, but it taught us. We had debates, sports, and so many fun things. We had sunrise services at the beach and on top of the old fort in St. Augustine. We'd go over to Orange Park, which at the time was all woods, and meet with many young people there. We had a certain spot they called Scout's Bluff and we would build a fire and roast wieners and play kids games. Today, if you asked teenagers to play these kid games they'd be horrified. But we just had fun playing, 'three deep,' 'too late for supper,' and 'drop the handkerchief,' just anything to be together. Then we had hayrides to Jacksonville Beach.

"At age 13 or 14 I was asked to be the pianist for Sunday School and this is really the first office that I held in the Church. I have held from one to six at a time ever since, but it has been wonderful training for me. I took piano lessons from sister Adaline Chace for several years. She was the daughter of George Paul Canova who was assassinated in Baker County because he gave assistance to the missionaries."

Vella had always made it a practice to do anything she was asked to do in the Church because she felt it was a calling from the Lord, but she explained to the Sunday School Superintendent that she did not know many of the hymns. He promised her if she would take the calling she would learn faster than she had before. She did, but for awhile the congregation sang a lot of, 'Merry Merry Children Sweetly Sing', for Sacrament, 'Rock of Ages' and for closing, 'Catch the Sunshine', the only hymns she knew.

"The Church sent Lorenzo Mitchell from the Music Department to help us with the music," she said. "He

taught those that were interested to lead the singing. We learned so much from him, things we have used through the years."

"About this time we moved out of town to Wesconnett. I was asked to be pianist for the Primary also," she said. "I rode the school bus into Jacksonville to attend Robert E. Lee High School and after school I would walk to the Church which was quite a ways. After Primary I went home with the Primary President, Sister Martha Rudd, had supper with her family, then went back with them to MIA at 7:30 P.M. After MIA I rode home with someone from the Tom and Nora Copeland family who lived down the road from us. That may seem involved, but I enjoyed all of it. I was visiting my daughter in Salt Lake and she asked me to go visiting teaching with her. All the sisters she visited lived within her block. A few years ago, when they had a branch at Interlachen, which my husband was branch president of, I clocked one hundred and six miles on the car in one day. Things in the South are much different than in the West."

At 16 Vella said she was asked to supervise a Primary at Wesconnett, 'so the children out there could get the blessings from the lessons'. It was held in an old wooden schoolhouse no longer used for a school. At 18 she was set apart as district Primary superintendent and eventually earned a 25 year pin.

Leadership meetings in the early days were referred to as Union meetings. They were held monthly, and faithful leaders travelled many miles to attend.

While she served faithfully, she was especially influenced by Thomas C. Copeland, district councilman over the primary organization.

"He was the father of W.O. Copeland, who was once our west stake president. To this day, fifty and more years later, I remember things he told us," she said. "One thing he stressed was that we start meetings on time. 'When a meeting has a set time to start, we have an appointment with the Lord, and we must not keep the Lord waiting,' he'd say. 'Many times since then I'd get to my meetings at the appointed time, had prayer by myself, went over the schedule for the day and ready to start when the others dragged in. I attribute that to my memories of him. He was a very special, but strict person. "

"When we used to have dances down in the basement at Park and Copeland, nobody danced close together. There had to be light between you. No cheek-to-cheek dancing. If anybody got too close they were tactfully asked to stop. Brother Copeland was one of those that made sure we abided by the rules. One night I remember someone took a ruler going around seeing how far apart the young people were."

In those days the youth of the Church found the programs planned for them such fun that the memories still live on.

“Whole carloads of us would go out to Scout’s Bluff at Orange Park for wiener roasts, game playing, and just having fun together. We’d play kid games, eat, and have a good time. The first time I went out there, Alvin Chace asked me to go. I’d never had a date. I was only twelve, but I was real grown up and they didn’t have rules in the Church back then about waiting until you were sixteen. We just had a good time.

“The leaders of the Church in Salt Lake, and sometimes in talks down here, would say that we should marry those that believed as we did. It’s good, but some of our strongest members were not members when they married. There just weren’t that many eligible boys and girls down here in the Church. Most of us felt like brothers and sisters. I see some of them when we go to conference now, and they’re as old as I am. I just grab them and hug their necks. Just seems like my brothers.”

One of the most important events in her life occurred when her father, John Valentine, brought his family to San Mateo for a Pioneer Day social, accompanied by another church member Rudy Rudd and his family.

“It was the first time I had ever been in this community. The amateur rodeo was held in the front yard of the Hawkins family, next to the little white church in San Mateo. This cute, curly headed, slender, young man came across that yard riding a bucking steer. Little did I know, for I didn’t even meet him that day, that four years later I would walk down the aisle in that little white church next to where I was standing and become his wife.

The young man was Woodrow Wilson Tilton, son of William Fritchett and Evelyn Solano Tilton, a prominent ranching family in San Mateo.

“After Woody and I were married in 1937, (he was still at that time on the district council, and also the Scoutmaster of the San Mateo Boy Scout troop), I was set apart as Beehive leader. We were a young couple with lots of pep and vim. We had nearly all the young people in this community coming out to MIA, as many non-members, sometimes more than members. One lady walked all the way to where we were living in downtown San Mateo to tell me she didn’t mind her daughter going to Beehive class, but she didn’t want her to hear anything about the Mormon Church. So I worked with that. When our girls learned the Articles of Faith, I would let the non-member girls learn the Ten Commandments. We had some great times and I feel we had a good influence on the community. The first MIA was organized in Jacksonville, and the second one

was in San Mateo,” she said.

In the early 1940’s she served as the president of the San Mateo Women’s Club and president of the East Palatka Elementary PTA. She also served as supervisor of the Florida District Primaries for ten years.

After marriage the couple began their family with a son, Woody Tilton, Jr., born in 1938, and a daughter Judy in 1940.

For six years the couple lived in San Mateo surrounded by an orange grove that Woody had bought just before their marriage. Later they moved to a farm in East Palatka to be near Woody’s work. Another son, Larry arrived there in 1945 and while she was expecting her fourth baby, a son John, she was released as supervisor of the Florida District primaries after ten years of service because it became difficult for her to travel long distances to attend meetings with small children.

The farm brought a new kind of problem for Woody. For 10 years he suffered from hay fever because of the abundance of ragweed in the area. Every year he became sicker and the last year he was hospitalized.

“He finally located us a ranch southwest of Palatka where there was no ragweed. He bought 25 thousand acres and we lived there almost 30 years,” she said.

Vella had lived through, and served the Church in the pioneering days of the Florida Conference, and Florida District. When the Florida Stake was created in 1947 there were about 75 members in the San Mateo Branch and the same in the Palatka Ward, so the two were combined and her husband became the first bishop. For nine years he served in that position, and took advantage of Vella’s vast knowledge and experience to serve wherever he needed her in the Ward. The new Stake President, Alvin Chace, had the same idea. With all of Vella’s experience he needed a Stake Relief Society president. At the time she was serving as a stake missionary, a calling she was enjoying more than any she had ever experienced. In fact, she says, the stake missionary experience gave her the greatest test of her faith when, one day, a contact she was teaching asked her a question she had never before pondered. ‘How do you know the Book of Mormon is true because, compared to the Bible all the names in it are so different?’

“That had never occurred to me before,” said Vella. “I thought, wouldn’t it be terrible if I found out that what we’re teaching is not true. We were raised in the Church. Sometimes you think you get your testimony from your ancestors, but there comes a time when you’ve got to make up your mind if it’s your testimony or if you’re going on what your parents taught you. I had to go home and study and pray about it and the spirit of doubt left entirely. That is the only time in my life that I’ve ever had doubts creep in.”



Pleading with President Chace to allow her to remain a stake missionary because she loved going out to teach the gospel, he told her that he felt her children were old enough for her to serve effectively as the Stake Relief Society president. Even though the stake boundaries were from South Georgia, down to Bunnell, Florida, she accepted the call to serve.

"We didn't think we were ever going to have any more children," she said. "We wanted a big family but felt blessed to have the four we had. However, a little over a year after I was set apart, I had a baby boy, David. I was 39 years old. Fifteen months later, I had another baby boy we named Danny. With the two new babies, and helping my husband on the ranch as bookkeeper and all, I was released from that office.

As the years passed Vella saw many leaders called and released in the Church. One of her favorite leaders was the Southern State's Mission President LeGrand Richards who arrived in Atlanta, Georgia, January 6, 1934.

"A conference was held in Jacksonville at the Mayflower Hotel and he was there. I was one of the speakers so I sat on the stage with him. He talked with such enthusiasm and as he spoke he would grab his coat tails. I thought he was going to rip his coat. He was a very inspiring speaker.

"When I was growing up they didn't just have conference twice a year, but it was held every three months. The mission president would come. Two meetings were held on Saturday and three on Sunday," she said, adding, "the Saturday activities were usually a social and meetings for the leaders."

It was while attending one of the conferences that her husband Woody first noticed her. It was the last conference before President Charles A. Callis went West and she was singing in the choir. "I was only 15 years-old and the youngest person in the choir," she said.

"In October of 1940 we went with Woody's parents and their nine children to conference in Salt Lake. Three of their boys were married and their wives went too, and one of Woody's aunts and uncles. We had three cars and it took longer to drive out than we thought. Conference had ended when we got there, but we all went to the Temple for sealings. It was special.

As Vella served actively in the community, as well as the Church, she credits her successes to the experience she gained while serving and training in Church callings.

"I had been taught that the good leader doesn't do the work of ten people, they get ten people to do the work. I knew how to organize. That's important. You must know how to delegate," she said adding, "The leaders from the West would come every year and hold meetings, little conferences, and teach us. The Church didn't give you books and materials like they do now."

Looking back on those early Church days there are some things she still treasures about her training.

"I remember going out to SLC in 1935 to accompany my sister, Garnetta, when she married Carlos Padgett in the Temple. We rode the train all the way out. I had pictured the Salt Lake Temple as being snow white. We got there and it was this gray stone. Now it seems perfectly normal to me, but that one little difference I had not expected. I was disappointed in being in Salt Lake. Back then I thought only angels lived in the State of Utah. Then I got out there and would see people mowing their lawns on Sunday and things like that. I had been brought up that we didn't do anything on Sunday. We didn't even skip across the floor. That would be too much like dancing. I remember we were on Fort George Island one summer camping on a little houseboat. One Sunday we children were outside. Well, my sister Betty, who is married to President James Hill, our former stake president, was just about nine years younger than I am. She had a little shovel and was digging. One of the other children said, 'Don't dig Betty. It's Sunday.' She stepped over a few inches and said, 'Is it Sunday here too?' (laughter) We weren't forced not to do anything, but it was just understood. We didn't go swimming on Sunday. We didn't dance. We didn't go fishing on Sunday. We kept the Sabbath Day holy."

Widowed in 1993 Vella now lives in the Tilton family home where Woody and all of his brothers and sisters were born. Fading pictures of pioneer family members grace every wall mingled with the present day descendants. Memories of Church life are kept alive in the vast collection of organized record books Vella faithfully keeps. The same towering oaks shade Tilton Lane where the small San Mateo Branch once bustled with activity. Quiet are the fields and pastures where Woody roped cows, and supervised large crews who grew a thousand acres of cabbage and potatoes. Rustic archaic barns, once a flurry of action, frame the scenic setting. It is silent except for the few family and friends who stop by occasionally to reminisce and savor Vella's warm southern hospitality. Descendants now number 82. She is grateful that so many of her posterity are active in the Church and have served missions carrying on the traditions and legacy of their forefathers.

"I am so glad to go back to the beginning of my story, and say how grateful I am that grandmother Henrietta was foresighted enough to accept the gospel in 1896, and that it was passed down from her to my mother, and from my mother to me," she said.

Most likely the equivalent of Vella Valentine Tilton will not pass our way again. She is a legend among the pioneer Church members in the South, and has proven her faithfulness time and time again in dedication and service. Her descendants can count themselves among the most fortunate to have her matchless example of faith and fortitude to follow.



## *OH, HOW I WISH*

*Oh, how I wish, that I could see-  
Far beyond eternity  
How I wish I could behold  
Faces there of young and old!  
How I wish I could embrace  
Those I meet there face to face-  
And say to them so reverently  
"You mean all the world to me!!  
Never did I know your name  
Never did I know your fame  
Until one day I sought to know  
So ordinance work could help you grow  
Someday perhaps you'll say to me  
The work you did turned the key  
Unlocked the door and I passed through  
To share eternity with you."*

*La Viece M. Smallwood*







*L. Blaine Vorwaller  
Jacksonville East Stake President  
1968 to 1978*

## LOUIS BLAINE VORWALLER

Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida

The following information was taken from the transcript of a 1981 oral interview by David Boone of Brigham Young University Historical Department. David's work was made possible by a grant from the James R. Moyle Foundation.

Louis Blaine Vorwaller is one of those rare persons from the West that blended in perfectly with the southern people and southern ways. Perhaps it is because he fell in love and married a true southern belle, Joyce Bedenbaugh, whose maternal grandparents, Arthur Nelson and Polly Ann (Wells) Douberley, are among the oldest pioneer families in Florida.

Blaine Vorwaller became the first stake president of the Jacksonville Stake 1968-78 (later the Jacksonville East Stake). He has grown with the Church and served faithfully and devotedly. Those who know him respect him as a great charitable leader.

He was born January 17, 1932, in Tooele, Utah, the son of Louis Reinhold and Bernice Emma (Johnson) Vorwaller. He met his wife, Joyce, while attending Brigham Young University where he received a B.S. degree in marketing and business administration in 1954. They married in 1952 and became the parents of five children. After returning from a tour of duty with the U.S. Air Force in northern Italy serving in NATO, the couple settled in Jacksonville in 1957. He made the choice to live in the South, a decision left to him by his wife.

"She wanted to live where I could make a living," he said, "so she left it up to me."

Referring to an impressionable 1952 trip to Florida, he commented, "I got enough sand in my shoes that I wanted to come back. There was something intriguing about it...I didn't know what it was...but I had a special feeling for the people in the South and the mission field there."

Thoughts of the South had seldom occurred to Blaine Vorwaller when he was growing up in Tooele. When he arrived in Jacksonville he said he found people who were very conscientious members of the Church.

After settling down with his family in Jacksonville, he found employment first with the J.C. Penny Company, where he only worked one month. Through a Church member he found employment with the Florida National Bank. Eventually he made a career, with the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, advancing to the position of Administrative Services Director.

Upon his arrival in Florida he immediately was

placed into stake missionary work by the stake president, Alvin C. Chace. His missionary companion was Acel J. Beasley, Joyce's uncle and President Chace's father-in-law. Brother Beasley taught him how to be an effective missionary, and during the nine months they served together they baptized Nelson Donald Harris, who later became a bishop, a member to the stake presidency in the Jacksonville West Stake, and eventually the West Stake President.

Blaine remembers that in teaching President Harris, one of their missionary appointments fell on Christmas Eve. The week before Blaine had called that fact to Brother Harris's attention and asked, "Would you like to wait until after Christmas?"

He said, "No, we would like you to come Christmas Eve."

So Blaine left his family that Christmas Eve in 1957 with Brother Beasley to go to the home of Don Harris, where they gave him another discussion. That was when Brother Harris committed himself to be baptized.

Of the baptism Blaine says, "Don had been a drill instructor at the Paris Island Marine training camp and was a large, muscular man. I remember at the baptism I forgot to tell him when he went down in the water to sink down and bend his knees. Instead he went back straight as a board and I went down with him. I couldn't hold his weight. So we had to perform that baptism over again. I'll always remember that."

Soon after that President Chace called Blaine to the position of Seventies unit leader. At 26 years he was the youngest one in the Seventies unit. He says, "I can remember going in front of them with fear and trembling, being new in the area, and wondering what these older brethren thought, since I was such a young buck. There were old Brothers Jasper W. Croft, Roy Dills, Acel J. Beasley, Lawrence K. Maddock, Roy Spradley, Sherwood Boxx, Charles Ford, and others. I remember Bill White was the next-to-the-youngest member. I grew to love those brethren and we had some choice times together."

Next he was called as assistant stake clerk to Clayton Perry and served under President Chace. In addition to that assignment in 1959, he was assigned to be a seminary teacher. He taught early morning seminary for five years and coordinated seminary in the stake for three years.

Of his next Church calling he said, "It was on a Saturday in February 1962, the week-end of stake conference and I was enjoying working in the yard when I received a call about four o'clock in the afternoon. I was asked if I'd come over and report to the stake center, which I did, and I was ushered into the stake president's office and President Joseph Fielding Smith was there.



He interviewed me and asked me to serve as second counselor to President Jenkins. I recall a very significant part of that interview, where he said, very kindly, 'Have you been on a mission?' I said, 'No, I was caught up in the Korean War era.' He said, 'Oh, that's too bad,' which it was, indicating that it was always desirable for brethren in leadership positions of that kind if they could have that experience.

"I was sustained the next day as second counselor in the stake presidency and had an enjoyable experience for about six years. I really came to love the Saints even more in that particular responsibility.

"People often ask me, 'Don't you have a desire to move back West? My reply is always, 'No.' When I'd go out for conference I'd look over the valleys and would think, 'If I moved out there on a permanent status, how would I feel?' I always had the feeling of wanting to go back to the South, and of not being satisfied to stay in the West. This yearning feeling for the South would always come back, and I don't ever remember a day that I was homesick to go back West."

Those truth behind those feelings were felt by the people whose lives have come into contact with Blaine Vorwaller. The ever-present glow and smile when he is in their presence is evidence enough of his love.

The sacrifice he and his family have made is recognized but perhaps not to the extent it should be. When he was called as a counselor in the stake presidency, his oldest son Gaylon was eight years of age. That fall, in October of 1962, his youngest daughter Carmen, child number five, was born. The two others born prior to that time were Rhonda and Mark, and their oldest child, Dana, had been born while he and Joyce were living in Italy during his military service. In his many testimonies, the people have heard him pay tribute to his wife and family, because he said, "Without their sustaining support I could not have fulfilled my callings."

Of his wife's sacrifice and support he said,

"I recall that many times during those counselor years she would get up at 5:30 Sunday morning to help me with transportation across town to meet President Jenkins and President William O. Copeland to go out of town. We would have to wake up all the children, haul them in the car that early in the morning and then she would return home with them.

"My dearly beloved wife has always sustained me in my callings over the years, which I have appreciated very much."

On September 14, 1968, Elder Mark E. Petersen came to Jacksonville and the Florida Stake was divided. The western part of the stake retained the name of Florida Stake and the eastern part of the stake became the Jacksonville Stake. President Henry V. Jenkins

remained president of the Florida Stake. L. Blaine Vorwaller was called to be the first president of the Jacksonville Stake (later, Jacksonville East Stake). His counselors were Woodrow E. Copeland and Edwin J. Bone.

Blaine says, "I recall that we ended up with a little over 2,000 people in our stake. Our resources weren't much. President Jenkins divided some of the resources available in cash to help us get started, and I recall that we had many obligations to meet.

"That September day after my two counselors were given their calls, we were sent into the high council room and told to organize our stake, which we did that late afternoon and on into the evening. We filled most of the major positions in the stake leadership to be sustained the next day and made some changes in bishoprics. I recall that Bishop Donald K. Brown was out on the golf course and he had to be called off the golf course to be called as bishop of the Sixth Ward.

"As we were struggling as a new presidency, learning our jobs, in January of 1969 I was called to Washington for a special meeting where President N. Eldon Tanner presided and several of the other General Authorities were there. All the stake presidents and mission presidents in the East were called together to hear a proposal for building the Washington Temple. Each stake president had an opportunity in that sacred meeting to get up and voice his feelings and support for the temple, which I felt a great honor to do in committing the people in the Jacksonville Stake to the building of the new temple.

"President Tanner said, 'Now you'll be given the financial obligation and we would like that completed in six months.' We didn't learn of the exact amount of that obligation until April, and we still considered the commitment due date to be calculated from January. Our commitment was over \$30,000 which was a lot of money for a small stake. It looked huge to me. But we had our financial obligation in by June 30th, and when it was all in, we had come pretty close to \$50,000 donated from the Jacksonville Stake for the temple.

"I remember one special story. The Jacksonville Third Ward at Ninth and Market Street was in an area that was going down economically. A lot of people moved out. The building right behind the main building was a Scout and classroom building that had been set on fire a couple of times by unwanted intruders, and it was decided that we must close the building down. The ward dearly needed a new building, and the people were working on their building fund. The stake presidency met with them and told them, through the Spirit, that if they would first commit themselves to the temple project, the Lord would bless them, if they would devote all their resources to meet the temple commitment, which

for that ward was over \$10,000. It was a large amount of money for them, almost overwhelming at the time. And they were promised that they would receive their new ward building. They promptly paid their temple financial assessment, plus a little more.

“It was rather interesting to note several things that happened. President Harold B. Lee, counselor in the First Presidency of the Church at the time, and Brother Delbert L. Stapley came to Florida. It was Elder Stapley’s conference and President Lee came with him, as he was on his way down to the Church ranch in central Florida. We were honored to have President Lee with us. It was interesting to note that at our priesthood leaders meeting in the afternoon a song was suggested and I asked the group, ‘Do we have a piano player?’ No one raised their hand, and so President Lee got up and said, ‘I’ll play.’ So President Lee played the piano while we sang. That was quite an experience — a humble servant of God willing to take the humblest task, using his talents to help the work along. I believe Brother Dean Madsen conducted the music that day.

“On that conference weekend the stake presidency drove President Lee and Elder Stapley to the Third Ward facility which had been boarded up. (We tried to have them meet in the Seventh Day Adventist Church, but decided to have them meet at the Park and Copeland ward building, which was actually in the Florida Stake, so the Third Ward crossed stake boundaries to meet for a time until we could get a building facility for them.) We explained what had happened and President Lee went back and made it possible for us to begin a building project without the full amount of starting funds that the Church policy normally required. It should be noted that Bishop Frank Milton, Sr. was bishop at the time, having served as bishop prior to that in Sanford, Florida. His total time as bishop after this experience had been over 20 years.

“The new Third Ward building that was built out on Dunns Avenue was built and dedicated prior to the dedication of the Washington Temple in the fall of 1974. We had a stake conference August 25, 1974, and Elder L. Tom Perry dedicated the Third Ward chapel that afternoon. It made an impact on me that the Lord’s promises to the Third Ward Saints through His humble servant had been fulfilled. They committed their funds and all their efforts first to the building of the Washington Temple and then to their own building needs, and they did receive their building. Their building was dedicated and paid for by people who first thought that they couldn’t do it. So this indicates the faith of the people.

“In my experiences as stake president I have found it interesting that many of the visiting authorities noted

how spiritual our stake conferences were, indicating the great spirituality that radiated from the people in this stake of Zion. To me it was an indication of the people in the South demonstrating their loyalty to God and of the spirituality among the people.

“Later on the stake names were changed, according to the wishes of the Church, and in the spring of 1974 the Florida Stake was renamed the Jacksonville Florida West Stake. Our stake, which had been known as the Jacksonville Stake, was changed to the Jacksonville Florida East Stake.

“At the time of my call as second counselor in the Florida Stake presidency, February 18, 1962, the stake consisted of approximately 4,900 members with nine wards, two independent branches, and two dependent branches. The wards were Axson, Ga.; Jacksonville First, Jacksonville Second, Jacksonville Third, Jacksonville Fourth, Jacksonville Fifth; Lake City, Florida; Palatka, Florida; and Waycross, Georgia. The independent branches were Gainesville, Sanderson, Oak Grove, and St. Augustine, all in Florida.

“On September 15, 1968, when the Florida Stake was divided, there were approximately 5,825 members with 11 wards, two independent branches, and three dependent branches. Wards were Axson, Ga.; Gainesville, Fl.; Jacksonville First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth; Lake City, Florida; Palatka, Florida; and Waycross, Ga. The independent branches were Kingsland, Ga., and Sanderson, Florida. The dependent branches were Bunnell, Oak Grove, and St. Augustine, all in Florida. At the division, the new Jacksonville Stake ended up with approximately 2,075 members. The reports reflected approximately 2,475; but after the membership records were purged, we ended up with approximately 2,075 members. The units left in the new Jacksonville Stake were the Axson Georgia Ward, Jacksonville Second and Third Wards, Kingsland Georgia Branch, and Waycross Georgia Ward.

“Between September of 1968, when I was called as stake president, and April of 1978, when I was released as stake president, the following additions and deletions took place:

1 – On October 25-26, 1975, I was assigned by the Brethren to assist Elder LeGrand Richards in organizing a new stake in south Georgia. President Seth D. Redford of the Georgia Atlanta Mission and President Stanley C. Kimball, Jr. of the Florida Tallahassee Mission also assisted. A new stake was created out of two mission districts and part of the Jacksonville East Stake. The new stake created was the Douglas Georgia Stake. Two of our units, the Waycross Georgia Ward and the Axson Georgia Ward, went to the new Douglas Georgia Stake. Members from these two wards totaled about



2 – On November 8-9, 1975, Elder John H. Vandenberg was our stake conference visitor. At this conference two new units were brought into the stake from the South Georgia mission district. They were the Brunswick Georgia Ward and the Darien Georgia Branch, totaling about 450 members.

When I was released as stake president there was a net total of eight units: Brunswick Georgia Ward, Darien Georgia Branch, Jacksonville Second, Third and Sixth Wards, Jacksonville Beach Ward, Kingsland Georgia Ward, and St. Augustine Branch. Total membership was about 3,060.

“In March of 1978, nearly ten years after I’d been called as a stake president, I received a call from Elder LeGrand Richards indicating that the Brethren wished to release me as stake president of the Jacksonville Florida East Stake and call me as a regional representative, which was quite a humbling experience, and unexpected, although I had mentioned to my wife several times that I felt something was coming and that I must be going to be released. As was experienced in many instances during my calling as stake president, I felt the forces of the adversary heavily upon me at that time.

“It was at the April conference of 1978 that I was officially installed as a regional representative of the Twelve, and set apart by Elder LeGrand Richards on March 31st.

“On April 30, 1978, I was officially released as stake president. Elder M. Russell Ballard gave me an unusual opportunity by asking me to join him like a General Authority in going through the interview process. So I joined him in my capacity as regional representative in making the change, in which President Robert E. Bone was called as stake president. He had formerly served as a counselor in the stake presidency and at the time of the call he was serving as bishop of the Kingsland Ward, where he was living. He is the son of Edwin J. Bone, who was my first second counselor in the stake presidency. I had the opportunity of having them both serve as my second counselors in the stake presidency, which was very choice. My first second counselor was Edwin J. Bone, the second one was James E. Campbell, Jr., then Robert E. Bone, and then James R. Brannen. My first counselor was Woodrow E. Copeland, who served with me the entire period of my calling as stake president, nine years and nine months.

“An interesting experience happened to me that year and I have recorded it in my journal. I was sitting in my office during the daytime on Friday, June 8, I received a call from Elder M. Russell Ballard, who was our General Authority area supervisor at the time. He said, ‘Blaine, a very significant thing has happened, perhaps the most

astounding event in these last days in our period of time.’ Then he went on to explain that President Spencer W. Kimball had received a revelation from the Lord, and he made the announcement, which had been announced to the press that very day, that all mankind, regardless of race, color or whatever, based upon their meeting the requirements of the priesthood, may receive the Melchizedek Priesthood of our Lord and Savior. And he indicated that now the black people, who are so prevalent in the South, were eligible to receive the priesthood. And he referred to the ninth Article of Faith, which states, ‘We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.’

“That day I called the stake presidents and told them of the announcement. The following day was our regional meeting, which was my first after being called as a regional representative. I believe they thought perhaps this would never occur in their lifetime, but perhaps in the millennium.

“The feeling was, ‘If the Lord revealed this to the prophet, of course we sustain the prophet in this announcement and accept it and are willing to receive the Blacks in to the priesthood.’ Among these men who held leadership positions, there were none that expressed to me any opposition in any way. They adjusted their thinking, accepted the revelation, and went on from there. So I felt good about that.”

About his wife’s family, he said:

“My father-in-law, though he was against the Church, permitted my wife when she was almost 13 years old to join the Mormon Church, with great reservations. Later he also, with great reservations, permitted her to attend BYU. It was during that time that he became converted to the Church, through his own research and the friendship of the two missionaries who visited with him at his barbershop. Three weeks after our marriage in 1952, he announced that he was going to be baptized.

“On June 26, 1952, we went to a lake just west of Lake City, and we joked about it. He said, ‘I have so many sins that when I’m baptized it will probably pop all the alligators out of the lake.’ Well, he went into the lake to be baptized by my brother-in-law, Arthur. Looking out several yards from where they were, I saw something that looked like a log. As the baptismal service concluded and when my father-in-law came up out of the water, an alligator surfaced up out of the water also! So, in his joking way, he said that he did pop an alligator out of the water with the washing away of his sins.

“My father-in-law, Frank Willoughby Bedenbaugh,

when he was 19, married Emma Katiebell Douberley, who was only 15 and the youngest of 15 children. She was a member of the Church. The Mormon missionaries had converted her parents, Arthur Nelson and Polly Ann (Wells) Douberley, early in 1897.

They were not baptized immediately because Nelson was deaf and although he could lip-read, it took longer for him to understand the gospel. They were baptized in Columbia County, April 26, 1897. Emma held on to the faith, although she seldom had the opportunity to attend her own church in the early years of their marriage. She went with her husband to the Methodist and Lutheran churches. Never once that I ever heard of did her testimony of the Church falter.

When my wife was about eight years old, she and her mother, Emma, began attending the Mormon Church together as often as possible. They often attended four church meetings on Sunday; the Mormon Church at 10:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., and the Methodist Church at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

"Later on my father-in-law served five terms as a state legislator in Columbia County. He and his family were very musical and he played the violin and fiddle, and later on the banjo. At the age of 80 he could sing, play the banjo, and dance...all at the same time. The children loved to see him do that and sing a lot of his old-time Southern songs.

"After coming into the Church he served as a missionary, Elders Quorum president, a counselor in the bishopric, bishop, and on the high council. He and Emma served a full-time mission under President Mark Benson in the Indiana Mission for 18 months. He communicated with President Ezra Taft Benson, in person and through the mails, supporting him in his strong views concerning the constitution of this great land of America. He has been very strong in his testimony of the gospel. He reminds me of Paul of old."

With respect to the Church's program under his leadership, Brother Vorwaller made reference to the seminary and institute programs.

"The early morning seminary program helped to establish a solid foundation of the gospel in the minds of the youth. I have found that it has been a great strength to the Church locally. We have found among the youth that those who complete seminary are more apt to marry in the temple and go on missions. In later life we find a higher percentage of them active in the Church. As I reflect back on many of the seminary students that I had in my classes, this has actually been a fact. There is possibly less than one or two percent that are inactive in the Church now.

"After about ten years of experience in early morning seminary, it was decided to go to home study in this

area. This happened in the same year that mandatory busing was instituted in the Jacksonville area.

Jacksonville has been known as the most bussed city in America, or in the South. The busing really upset our early-morning seminary program, because of the number of high schools that were involved. So home study was a great blessing at the time it came to us in helping our seminary to pull together and it has served a real need for us. We are trying to return to early-morning seminary, but where areas are spread out home study will be available.

Early morning seminary is more desirable because of the daily contact that the young people have with each other and with their instructor, who is one that has a testimony of the gospel, is well-founded in the gospel, and helps on a daily basis to give spiritual strength in these trying times.

"One of the major problems we faced in the administration of the stake was keeping the stake organized. There is more to it than the high council and stake auxiliaries. It includes every ward and every branch, all the key priesthood leadership positions. So the greatest challenge is keeping the stake organized. The second great challenge was to keep our youth in the Church and provide for them the programs to help build testimonies and while doing it, setting proper standards. One of the greatest challenges was that we tried to overcome the great influence of the loud, out-of-the-way rock-and-roll influences. The third area we are dealing with are the many social service problems that a bishop or stake president faces in keeping families together, and helping to thwart the efforts of the Adversary in breaking up our families.

"The building of temples in the South brought a new spiritual force here. This influence affected our young people. Excursion groups among the youth organized to attend the temple to do baptismal work for the dead created a new spiritual atmosphere among our people.

"Well-organized youth conferences do a lot of good to bring young people together to share their testimonies and to help build spiritual experiences for them.

The Scout program helps in developing the young men. Stake leaders are striving to build up Mormon relationships with the local Scout Council and in the community.

"It is my feeling that as we have grown we have developed a fairly strong priesthood base, so that as we grow we can meet the growth needs through having adequately trained priesthood."

Brother Vorwaller served as Regional Representative for six and a half years with assignments in north Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama



One of the highlights of his regional work was being vice-chairman of the Atlanta Temple dedication and attending the dedicatory services held June 1-4, 1983, with President Gordon B. Hinckley, second counselor in the First Presidency presiding. He had the opportunity of attending the cornerstone sealing on the morning of June 1st and the eleven dedicatory sessions that followed.

"A great spirit prevailed at the dedicatory services. I wrote in my journal, 'The Spirit was overwhelming. It was as at the Day of Pentecost, except the spirit came 'rushing in' in a silent manner, piercing the heart, mind, and soul. Many tears were shed. My soul was filled to the brim.

"I was given the privilege to speak at the concluding session at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday June 4th. My soul was so full that it was difficult to speak. It was very evident that an unseen congregation was present."

"I have deemed it a great blessing provided by my Heavenly Father to have participated in the growth of the Church in the South. If I had it to do over again, I wouldn't ask for it to be any other way. It hasn't been easy at times, but the lord has blessed us and I am just looking forward in an excited way to the continued growth and development of the Church."

Regarding missionary work in the South, he repeated something Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone said, "I have a vision that the South will one day baptize more people into the Church than the rest of the English-speaking world together. I believe the Lord is preparing a mighty host of devoutly religious people who will, when they see their pastors and ministers veering away from the gospel, come into the Church in great numbers."

Brother Vorwaller continues, "Great things are happening in the South. It is my hope and prayer that we may meet the expectations of the Lord and go forth with our might, mind, and soul, laboring in His vineyard to bring about His holy purposes."

Since this interview, Brother Vorwaller has served as a counselor to two mission presidents, President Floyd L. Packer of the Florida Tallahassee Mission and President Douglas W. DeHaan of the Florida Jacksonville Mission, and as bishop of the Jacksonville Second Ward. Then he and his wife served an 18 month mission (1994-95) in the West Indies Mission, where he was a counselor to the mission president, Roy R. Valantine.

Presently Brother Vorwaller and his wife have been called to work in the Orlando Florida Temple where Brother Vorwaller is a temple sealer.

All of their children have been married in the temple and are active in the Church. Their two sons, Gaylon and Mark, and their youngest daughter, Carmen, served full-time missions. Now, in 1996, they have 22

grandchildren — the two oldest currently on missions for the Church.

Son Mark currently serves as Bishop in Melbourne, Florida and son Gaylon is presently Bishop in Jacksonville, Florida Second Ward.

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## ADAM-ONDI-AHMAN

*Oh the beauty of the hills  
Where golden rods and daffodils  
Attest to God's Holy Plan  
Where once again He'll meet with man.  
Oh the beauty of the day  
On sacred ground we kneel to pray  
In groves of trees, and gardens sweet  
A place of peaceful sweet retreat  
In this valley Adam dwelt  
And to our God an alter built  
Eve once walked close by His side  
Peace and harmony did abide  
Oh how our hearts in rapture sing  
Though we feel the tempter's sting  
That caused the fall where we not stand  
And view the fate of this great land  
Still the peace here one can find  
Through the ages of mankind....from  
Mother Eve's renown temptation  
Someday will come the restoration.*

*La Viece M. Smallwood*

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# PERRY V. AND BRAXTON (BRACKSON) JACKSON VOYLES

Suwannee County, Florida



*Emaline Maconson and Perry Voyles*

Perry Voyles, son of John Hess and Jane Reno Voyles, was born in Jackson County, Georgia on June 8, 1826. Before moving to Lake Apopka, in Sumter County, Florida, he married Elvira Emaline Maconson and the couple had two sons, James and Albert. Sometime before 1854 the couple moved and settled approximately five miles southwest of Live Oak in Suwannee County, Florida, where they reared 13 children.

In 1895 Mormon missionaries entered the Live Oak area for the first time and began to hold meetings. The missionaries found favor with Mr. Whitefield, editor of the local newspaper, *The Banner*. Through his editorials, Mr. Whitefield encouraged his readers to attend meetings held by the missionaries.

The Voyles were Methodist, but Perry was restless and concerned about religion. He felt that the existing churches were not in accordance with the teachings of the Bible. He had prayed earnestly to know if there was "a true church", organized as in Jesus's day, with prophets and apostles. His prayers were answered in a dream that he related many times to his children and grandchildren. In his dream, he said he plainly saw two young men wearing dark suits and derby hats. He often pondered the dream and its meaning.

One morning, while sitting on his front porch, he noticed two young men wearing dark suits and derby hats walking down the road. He immediately left the porch and intercepted the young men at his front gate. He invited them into his home and said, "Come in, I've been expecting you." When Perry heard their message, he said he knew it was true.

From that time on the Elders held 'Cottage Meetings' in the Voyles home. One of Perry and Elvira's sons, Braxton (Brack) Jackson Voyles wasn't as convinced as his parents about what he heard the missionaries

teach. However, he prayed, read, and pondered the scriptures for six months and on March 17, 1896, he and his wife Eliza Emmaline (Linnie) Lamb Voyles were baptized with eight others in a tiny shallow pond on the Voyles farm. In describing that experience, Linnie recorded, "The water was so cold, I just knew we'd freeze. The women made a tent of bed sheets to use for changing their clothes, while the men retired to the bushes or into the woods. Despite the coldness of the atmosphere, we stayed quite warm."

Eliza was baptized by Elder Joseph A. West and confirmed by Elder W.G. Fisher. Braxton was baptized by Joseph A. West. It is not known why, but Perry and Elvira were not baptized until May 10, 1896. Their daughter Lula (Hurst), and son William Jefferson joined on July 5th of that year.

The little congregation began to expand, and within eight months 34 converted and baptized persons were ready to be organized. On July 4, 1896, Perry Voyles was ordained a priest by Elder W.G. Fisher. His son Braxton was ordained by T.F. Wasden on Oct. 4th of the same year. On June 28th President Joseph A. West with Elders C.J. Brown, W.H. Summerhays and W.G. Fisher established the Woodruff Sabbath School five miles west of Live Oak. They named it in honor of the Church president, Wilford Woodruff. Perry Voyles was the first superintendent and his son Braxton was one of his assistants. When Perry was released, Braxton was called to serve and did so for approximately six more years. Braxton served a mission in West Florida in 1898 for the purpose of organizing Sabbath Schools in that area.

As the Church membership grew, so did persecution. Perry's neighbor, George Howes, was a school trustee and Braxton had obtained permission for the Elders to use the community school house for a meeting. However Mr. Howes decided just before the meeting that, "it wasn't good to have Mormons preaching at the school house". As the story goes, he perched himself on the school house steps and informed the Elders of his decision. When Braxton stepped forward and asked his neighbor why, an argument ensued. According to his daughter, Olive Neva Dyal, and his sons Joseph and Hyrum, one word led to another and Mr. Howes retorted, "Well, if they preach here tonight it will be over my dead body". To this Braxton responded, "Well, if that is what it takes, we can surely have the meeting..." and delivered a mighty blow with his bare fist to Mr. Howes knocking him off his feet. Linnie Voyles later told her daughter Agnes that when their neighbor got up off the ground, her husband said, "Now George, take your men, and go home and sit by the hearth with your wives."

Eventually the group of Saints acquired four acres of land where, on one acre, they built an arbor for the pur-



pose of holding Conferences. The land on which the Woodruff Chapel was eventually built belonged to Braxton and remained in the Voyles family until his daughter, Olive Neva Voyles Dyal, and her husband John Lester Dyal sold it. W.H. Redding gave the group an acre of land in another location with an existing church where they met for Sunday School. According to Braxton's son, Hyrum, the 16x24 Woodruff Chapel was built by Church members and their neighbors from rough hewn lumber from his Grandpa Henry J. Lamb's homeplace. Hyrum said, "The wood was cut at Sutton's old pepper box sawmill and the church benches were built too". He reported that the building was finished on a Saturday evening and the proud group held Sunday School in it the following day.

Persecution continued, and according to the Voyles family history, a mob heard that the missionaries were at Braxton's house, so they came threatening to beat them and drive them out of the community. When the Elders heard the mob was on the way they became frightened. Braxton, a large man in stature, hid them inside the large chimney in his home. When the assailants arrived he met them on his porch, called them cowards and dared them to get off their horses. They took him seriously and didn't get off.

On another occasion, Braxton's sister-in-law Ellen met a mob at her gate and told them the Elders visiting her home had a very contagious disease and were very sick. The mob left.

Another incident occurred when Braxton took two Elders to the community of Orange in Suwannee County where they were planning to preach that night in a little community building. When they arrived they were met by a mob whose intention was violence. A man by the name of John Robinson grabbed the reins of Braxton's mule and began to turn the wagon around. One of the Elders pleaded, "Brother Voyles, please don't do anything, just let 'em go. Please turn the wagon around." He did as the missionary pleaded and left without further incident.

Braxton Voyles died on April 11, 1932, and was buried in Rocky Sink Cemetery two days later. He was laid to rest next to his parents, his daughter Elsie, his son Lester, and other relatives. Protest of his funeral services in the Rocky Sink Baptist Church and burial in the adjoining church cemetery (which was the nearest to their home at the time), was made by Harry Howes, a son of Braxton's long-time neighbor, George. When Harry Howes was out-voted by those in charge, he howled, "If anybody mentions the name of Joseph Smith, the funeral will be over." The funeral was held without incident.

In February of 1958, when Braxton's daughter,

Olive Neva Dyal's funeral was to be held in the same church, the same Mr. Howes protested again. Since that time Braxton's wife Eliza Emmaline, and four of their sons, Joseph, Hyrum, Homer and Melvin have all been buried in the family plot.

Amazingly, when the Florida Stake was created in Jacksonville on January 19, 1947, in attendance were members of George Howes family who were now baptized members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

As time passed, many Church members moved away in search of a better life, and the little Woodruff Chapel located on Braxton's property was abandoned. Those who remained in the area held Sunday School in their homes. The little Church that had fulfilled its purpose fell prey to a storage house for cotton, corn, etc.

The posterity of the Perry Voyles family continues to move forward steadily in Church service. More than 30 of their posterity have served full time missions around the world.

*Related: Suwannee County and Fla. Conference*

*Map Location: Live Oak (Woodruff Sunday School and Woodruff Chapel)*

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## *HIS NAME WAS JOSEPH*

*He stood alone-  
The day he sought his God  
He walked alone  
And held the iron rod  
Which led him there  
Inside the sacred grove  
Where he knelt  
To offer up his heart.*

*What he saw  
Was so much more than he  
Had ever dreamed  
That he would ever see  
And what he learned  
Was holy and divine  
He found the way  
To lead all of mankind.*

*Like years before  
Through Godly men of old  
Who prophesied and  
This story they foretold!!*

*La Viece M. Smallwood*

# THE WILFORD FAMILY AT DOCTOR'S INLET

As told by Hazel Wilford Starling

Doctor's Inlet, a small community nestled on an inlet of water stemming from the St. John's River in the eastern section of Clay County, Florida, was home for more than half a century to the Wilford and Houston families, many of whom were dedicated pioneers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

It is not known when the Mormon missionaries first trekked to this area of Florida, but according to baptismal records of the Wilford family, baptisms were recorded as early as Dec. 18, 1897. Lewis II and his wife Elizabeth 'Eliza', Johnson Wilford were the first known members of the Wilford family to reside in Doctor's Inlet though Lewis I, who was born in Duval County was buried there at his death in 1840. His wife Silva Turner, who died about 1863, was buried in Duval County. Lewis II and Eliza had previously lived, according to the 1850 Federal census records, in the Clay Hill/Wesconnett district of Duval County. Several of their children remained in that area after they left. Lewis II died in Doctors Inlet on Jan 1, 1897 prior to baptismal records for five of the couple's eight adult children; (Daniel Sept 1, 1898 age 37, Sapphire Sept 2, 1898 age 24, Lougenia Oct 17, 1898 age 35 and Louis August 4, 1905, age 42.) Their son Henry Riley was not baptized until 1922 at age 33. Three of the couple's children, Sarah, Lucinda and Emanuel did not unite with the Church.

The couple was apparently well known by the missionaries who passed through the Clay County/Doctors Inlet area at the turn of the century because recorded on page 224 in the June 9, 1900 issue of the Southern Star, a Church publication, 'Eliza' Wilford, a devoted member of the Church, died on May 18th of that year at the age of 67 following a tragic accident in which her clothing caught fire and she was fatally burned. (Family records record her death date as May 7, 1900. It is assumed that Eliza was baptized at the same time as her adult children, however the above mention of her Church affiliation is the only record known of her membership.

The community of Doctor's Inlet was predominately Hardshell Baptist. Before their deaths, Lewis II, and Eliza generously offered their small home to the traveling missionaries who wanted to hold cottage meetings.

Though this was not a popular religion to accept in the community, several of those in the area who attended the meetings were soon baptized and the Church began to grow.

On May 19, 1896 a Doctor's Inlet couple Stella

Lougenia Cherry and George Washington Houston married. The couple became the parents of seven children between the years 1898 and 1910. They were Mary Idella, Philip Orson, Elsie Mae, Roy Alton, Emery Leonidist, James Madison and Ada Evelyn. In 1913 they attended a meeting of the Mormon missionaries in the Doctors Inlet community. Stella Houston would later tell her family that she felt the Spirit testify to her that the gospel she heard being taught that day was true.

Stella and her daughter Idella were baptized on June 15, 1913 along with other relatives. Within the year several others followed, including Stella's mother and step father, Mary Hardenbrook Cherry and William Murray.

The marriage of Louis II and Elizabeth's fifth child, Henry Riley Wilford to Louisa Hughes on March 24, 1884 had produced seven children: Henry Lee, Alice, Ardelia, Raymond Henry, Freddy, Theo Docia and Nora Della.

On August 5, 1914, their son, Raymond Henry Wilford married Mary Idella Houston, the daughter of George Washington and Stella Cherry Houston.. The couple, lived within a half mile of both their parents in Doctor's Inlet. Like most of their neighbors the couple farmed some, but Raymond also ran a General Store. In the depths of the Great Depression he was forced to close the door. The following day he burned the store's credit books knowing there would never be a way to collect the debts owed him. After that he made his living logging and as a mail carrier for the community. The couple's seven children, all born in Doctor's Inlet, are Raymond Henry, Jr., Hazel Irene, Mary Leila, Estelle Louise, George Willie, Margaret Jewel, and Olen Madison. The following account of the Wilford family in Doctors Inlet is told by Hazel, now Mrs. Dyruff Starling, of St. George, Utah.



*Jewell and Bill Wilford*

"One day when my brother Ray was six, and I was four, we were playing on the front porch of our home in Doctors Inlet when we saw two young men leave the main road and began walking up the lane to our front gate. They were dressed in dark suits and derby hats,



carrying a satchel. We ran to tell daddy that someone was coming to our house. Daddy was home that day because mama was very sick with pneumonia. The doctor had sent a registered nurse to care for her and planned to send her to the hospital in the city if she was no better by the next day. Daddy met the two young men, who were Mormon missionaries, at the gate. They talked for just a minute. Daddy opened the gate and they came in and went directly into mama's bedroom. In a short time they came out, shook hands with daddy and left. They had administered a Priesthood blessing for mama's recovery. The next day mama took nourishment, got out of bed, and the nurse was dismissed. After that our dad was so impressed that he was baptized into the Church on Feb 2, 1922. A few months later, his father, Henry Riley Wilford, and his sister Ardelia were baptized.



**Henry Riley Wilford**

"I remember well the day they were baptized which was May 20, 1922. There was quite a group in attendance on the shore of Doctors Lake and all of those being baptized were dressed in white. They took turns sitting in a chair to receive the 'laying on of hands' for the Gift of the Holy Ghost. It was a

very spiritual gathering. My mama, Mary Idella Houston Wilford, always told us that the two missionaries who came to our house in 1922 knew that she and her mother were baptized members of the Church that resulted from the 1913 missionaries who had held a cottage meeting in the community.

"I remember when we held our Church meeting upstairs in the school house. The members were full of faith and good works. Daddy was made Sunday School superintendent. He willingly donated an acre of land to build a small chapel located between our house and the school house. Grandpa, George W. Houston, with the help of Brother John Boxx

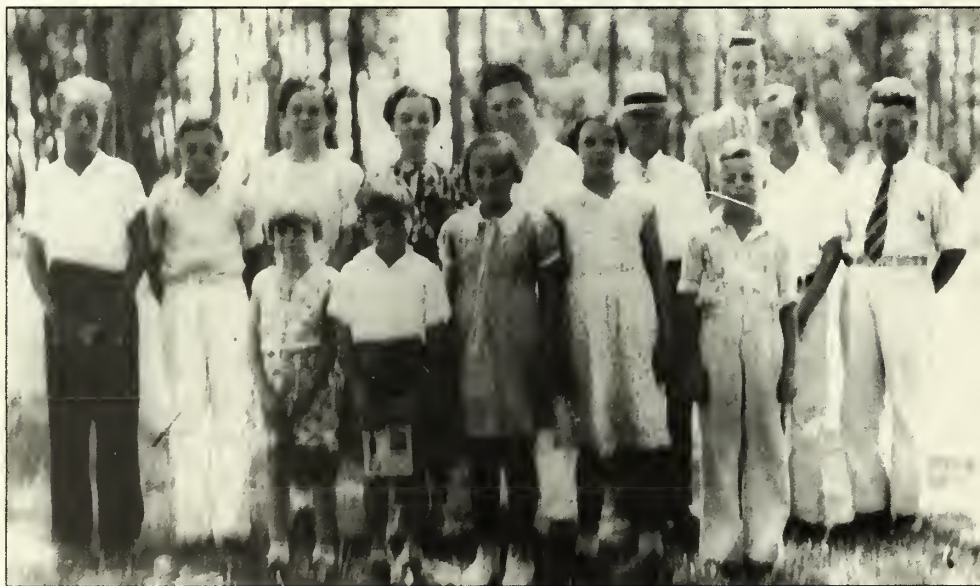
and others who were carpenters, pitched in and after working on their farms all day would work on the Church building. I was just a little girl, but I felt such pride that daddy and grandpa were giving so much so that we could have a church. I would swing on the frame work and watch grandpa saw boards, forming little pyramids of sawdust on the ground. Grandpa was a jolly, happy, fun natured man and was always teasing us kids and making us laugh.

"When the chapel was finished we celebrated with 'dinner on the ground' for the dedication services. We were all just one big happy family, the Davis family, the Boxx, Griffin, Houstons and the Wilfords. It was wonderful, willing hearts and families working together. The spirit of the Lord has been felt many times in that humble chapel where a curtain divided the one room into four classrooms where we studied the four standard works of the Church. Priesthood brethren came from Jacksonville, 25 miles away, to speak at sacrament meetings, etc. We all learned to give opening and closing prayers, and two and a half minute talks.

"In later years two general stores were opened in the community. Frank Huntly ran one and the other was owned by Leon Lee. Brother Lee built a pool for the



**LDS Chapel at Doctor's Inlet**



**Sunday Morning Church Meeting at Doctor's Inlet**

Front row, left to right: Thelma Griffin, unknown, Jewell Wilford, Emma Griffin, Herman Griffin

Back Row, left to right: Clyde Davis, George Bill Wilford, Estelle Wilford, Leila Wilford, Earl Starling, unknown in hat, Alvin Chace, visiting Elder, Loyd Davis and Robert Bob Davis.



community . I remember it cost a dime to use it. He also showed movies occasionally to the children.

"The years passed fast and soon we kids were growing up and thinking of where we would go and what we would do in life. The early missionaries had done a good job in Doctors Inlet and we had received the blessings of the gospel in our lives. My sisters Jewell, Estelle and I filled church missions. Later our son Don filled a mission for the Church as did Larry, son of my sister Estelle and Earl Perkins. Jim and Joel Hill, sons of my sister Jewel and her husband James also filled missions for the Church.

"Some years ago the little chapel in Doctors Inlet was torn down, completely worn out, but it did fulfill its mission and purpose. The acre of land was given back to daddy and he sold it to his cousin Mattie Doyle whose home is nearby. It remains a sacred spot in our heart and will throughout all eternity.

"Many years have passed away and with them so have many members of our family. Those of us that are left cherish our memories of those days we were all together in Doctors Inlet. My father, Raymond Henry Wilford died June 29, 1972 in Macclenny. Mother died on April 29, 1985 in Orlando. Both are buried in Peoria Cemetery in Clay County, Florida.

"My oldest brother, Raymond Henry Jr., served faithfully in the Church until his death on her 19th of April in 1989. He married Norma Bowen May 25, 1947. They lived in Orange Park, Florida until his death. They were the parents of eight children; Beverly, Darryl, Bonnie, David, Douglas, Russell and Libby.

"Jewel married James E. Hill Sept 18, 1947 and they had two sons, Jim and Joel. Our precious Jewell was taken from this life on Aug 13, 1977. She was always very active in the Church serving in many callings. She loved the youth and the choir. Musically talented she served as director for the combined Jacksonville Stakes choir for the dedication of the Washington Temple.

"I married Lorenzo Dyruff Starling of Jacksonville, Fl on Nov 14, 1939 and we now live in St. George Utah. Our two children are Don and Julie and they are active members in the Church.

"Mary Leila married John Cosmo Prevatt on Feb 28, 1940. They have three children: John, Jr., Linda and Rosemary. John Jr. is presently serving as bishop in Orlando where they all live.

"Estelle met Earl R. Perkins at a District Church conference in Atlanta while they were each serving a mission and they married Aug 12, 1943. Their three children are Larry, Sheryl, and Chris and all are very active in the Church. They live in Salt Lake City where Earl died on November 1, 1994.

"My brother George Willie (Bill) married first Nancy

Teretha Beasley, Aug 23, 1947 and they are the parents of three sons Wayne, Michael and Donald. After their divorce he married Beulah M. Yarbrough Sands on Jan. 24, 1974. They were sealed in the Washington Temple May 2, 1977. Bill was vigorously active in the Church for the past 20 years serving in the elders quorum and on the high council of the Jacksonville Florida West and the Lake City Florida stakes for more than 12 years. He also served in the Bishopric of his Macclenny Florida Ward until he was released because of failing health. Bill was well versed in the scriptures and extremely dedicated to his callings. Someone once said Bill gave the best talks they had ever heard in the Church and another said he was the most faithful home teacher they ever had. He was, as were all of the children of Raymond and Idella Wilford, very talented and especially proficient in playing the mandolin. Playing was a great pleasure for him whether for church functions or his friends. He was always willing to share his talent. He died Sept 11, 1996, in his home, in Glen St. Mary, Florida leaving behind his loving and devoted eternal companion Beulah. Along with our parents, and many other members of our family, Bill is buried in Peoria Cemetery in Clay County Florida.

"Olen Madison, married Linda Mae Dake on Mar 28, 1986 and they live in Rancho Sante Fe, California.

"What a blessing the Church has been to our family throughout the years, and may it ever be so."

Hazel Wilford Starling



*Jewell and Bill Wilford*





Beloved Prophet Gordon B. Hinckley



Russell M. Nelson  
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



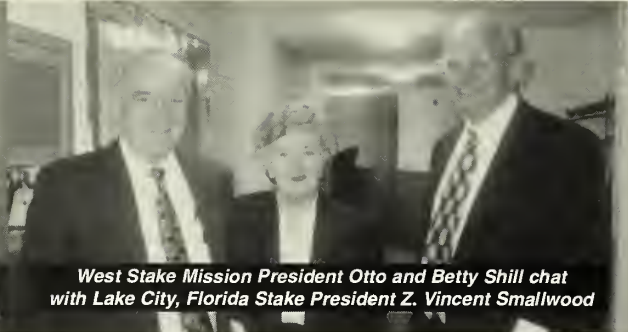
Sister Marjorie Hinckley



President Hinckley and West Stake  
President Nelson D. Harris



Lake City, Florida Stake President Z. Vincent Smallwood  
greets President Hinckley



West Stake Mission President Otto and Betty Shill chat  
with Lake City, Florida Stake President Z. Vincent Smallwood

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST SOUTHERN STAKE CELEBRATED BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

In Jacksonville, Florida

President Gordon B. Hinckley's visit to Jacksonville, Florida on January 19, 1997 brought more than 5,000 members to the Jacksonville Florida West Stake in Orange Park, Florida to join the celebration of the South's 50th year as a stake.

On January 19, 1947, under the direction of Apostles Harold B. Lee and Charles A. Callis of the Quorum of the Twelve, the first stake, not only in Florida, but also in the South, was organized.

Exactly 50 years later, on January 19, 1997, President Hinckley addressed two sessions of the Jacksonville West Stake Conference. Accompanied by his wife, Marjorie P. Hinckley, and Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve, and his wife, Dantzel, the church president called the organization of the Florida Stake "a wonderfully significant thing."

Members from six stakes were invited and attended this 50th anniversary celebration conference.

President Hinckley lauded Elder Charles A. Callis, former president of the Southern States Mission and a member of the Quorum of the Twelve who helped organize the South's first stake.

"It was the great crown of his life to see a stake in the South, this part of the world which he loved so dearly, among the people whom he loved so dearly," President Hinckley said of Callis who labored faithfully in the South for 28 years.

President Hinckley recalled many stories of Elder Callis and shared his memories of the man who is referred to as 'The Shepherd of the South' with the congregation.

Elder Callis died in Jacksonville one day following the organization of the stake and, during the 50th Anniversary Sunday Conference, he was remembered by President Hinckley as a great leader of the southern Latter-day Saints.

President Hinckley told the congregation that, "The future lies ahead. Let every man and woman and child in this congregation today resolve to make of the work of the Lord in this part of His vineyard better and stronger and greater than it has ever been before."

The Church President explained that the strength of the Church is not found in its physical facilities.

"We are building 350 new buildings a year across the world—a tremendous undertaking. But the strength of the Church is not in these buildings. The strength of the Church is not in the temples. The strength of the Church is not on the BYU campus. The strength of the Church is not on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. The strength of the Church is in the hearts of the people."

President Hinckley encouraged members to live every principle of the gospel. He spoke about the Word of Wisdom, the law

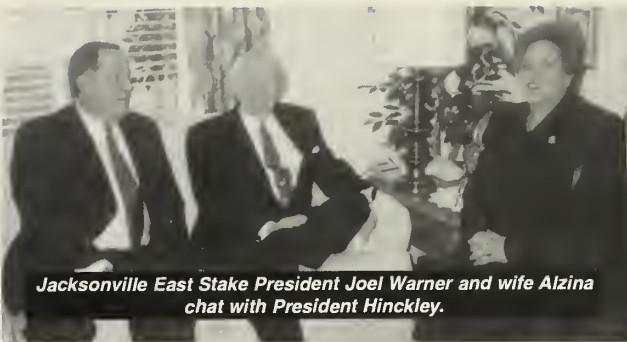


West Stake President, N. Don Harris with President and Mrs. Hinckley  
on their way to visit LDS Saints in the overflow outside tent.



Large outdoor tent accommodates overflow crowds  
that gather in cold and damp weather.





**Jacksonville East Stake President Joel Warner and wife Alzina chat with President Hinckley.**



**West Stake First Counselor William Herrington and his wife Sherry greet President Hinckley at Luncheon.**



**Henry V. Jenkins  
Second President of Florida Stake**



**James Hill, Former President,  
Jacksonville West Stake**



**Nelson D. Harris, President,  
Jacksonville Florida West Stake**



**Henry V. Jenkins, wife Edith, greet  
President Hinckley at Luncheon.**

of tithing and the blessings of temple attendance and temple marriage.

“Walk in faith and faithfulness,” he counseled. “Live the commandments. Love one another. Be kind to one another. Be generous toward one another and the Lord will bless you.”

The prophet reminded those present of the tremendous sacrifice of the earlier Saints who had endured hardships of all kinds to worship after the dictates of their own hearts.

“We have an obligation and a great work to do,” he said. “We cannot stand still, we have to move forward. It is imperative we do so.”

President Hinckley recalled the youthful members of the first stake presidency with reverence. He greeted the widow of the first stake president, Alzada Beasley Chace, who shared the podium, with a tender handshake. President Alvin Chace, who has since passed away, was remembered by President Hinckley as well as President Chace’s grandfather, George Paul Canova, who lost his life to an assassin for the Church’s cause in 1898. Also sharing the podium with President Hinckley was Marion Hinson Madsen, widow of E. Coleman Madsen, President Chace’s first counselor in the presidency. Second counselor was Jacquard Maurice Lindsey. Of the three, only Elder Madsen, a native of Utah, had ever been exposed to a stake or ward organization when the new stake was organized.

The capacity congregation gathered in the chapel and cultural hall and in overflow areas, classrooms and a large tent in the parking lot where the meeting was televised.

President Hinckley’s visit to those in the outdoor tent and overflow areas brought tears of appreciation to the eyes of many Saints who had gathered hours before his arrival in unusually cold weather and a slight chilling drizzle.

Between conference sessions, President Hinckley and his party, which also included his personal secretary, Brother Lowell R. Hardy, were driven by car to the Orange Park home of West Stake President, Don Harris and his wife, Anita. There he was joined by former and present presidents of the regional stakes and their wives for an impressive luncheon served by the West Stake Relief Society sisters.

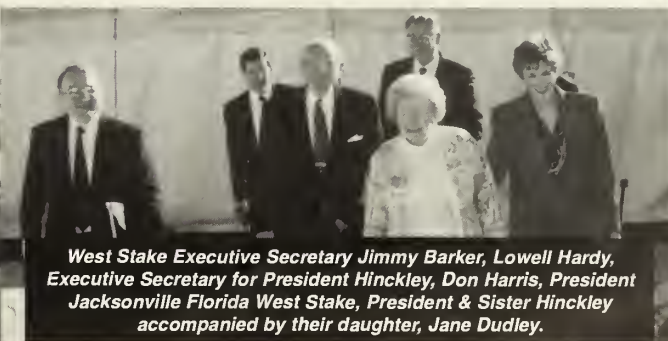
To those in attendance President Hinckley’s love for the Saints, not only in the South but throughout all the world, was evident as all hearts were touched by his tremendous spirit. President Hinckley’s visit to Jacksonville was part of a longer trip which included visits to Central America and regional conferences in Guatemala.

Six stakes presently make up the area of the first Florida stake which consisted of 1,800 members at the time of organization. Today it is estimated that 100,000 Church members live in Florida.

*(Data gathered from personal notes of author taken during the Jan 19, 1997 event and Church News of Jan 25, 1997.)*



**Long line of Saints brave damp and freezing temperatures to hear President Hinckley speak.**



**West Stake Executive Secretary Jimmy Barker, Lowell Hardy, Executive Secretary for President Hinckley, Don Harris, President Jacksonville Florida West Stake, President & Sister Hinckley accompanied by their daughter, Jane Dudley.**





*President Gordon B. and Sister Marjorie Hinckley during Luncheon at the home of West Stake President and Sister Nelson D. Harris.*



*With President Gordon and Sister Marjorie Hinckley, Jacksonville North Stake President Richard Padgett and his wife Libby speak with President Hinckley.*



*President Nelson D. and Sister Anita Harris greet President and Sister Hinckley to a Luncheon held in their home. Among others attending were Elder Russell M. Nelson and his wife Dantzel, and all former and present Stake Presidents.*

## A WORD FROM WEST STAKE PRESIDENT NELSON DONALD HARRIS

It was in early 1995 at a meeting of the Regional Stake Presidents that the 50th anniversary celebration of the creation of the Original Florida Stake was first discussed. There was information from the Area Presidency that there was to be a Regional Conference for the Jacksonville Region in January, 1996.

It was the consensus of the Stake Presidents that they should ask for the Regional Conference to be scheduled to coincide with the celebration of the creation of the Florida Stake in January, 1997. After consulting with the Area Presidency, it was determined that other Regional Conferences were already scheduled for that same time period in 1997 in other areas of the country and we were instructed to go ahead with the planned January 1996 Jacksonville Region Conference which was held in the Jacksonville Coliseum and presided over by President Thomas S. Monson.

On the night of July 18, 1996, during a meeting of the Stake Presidency, Jimmy C. Barker, Stake Executive Secretary for the Jacksonville Florida West Stake presented a letter to me and my two counselors, William J. Herrington, Jr. and Dennis D. Berry. It was addressed to President Gordon B. Hinckley with a written appeal for the prophet, or some member of the First Presidency and/or the Quorum of the Twelve, to attend



*Jacksonville West Stake Presidency  
L to R: William J. Herrington, First Counselor; Russell M. Nelson, Member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles; Gordon B. Hinckley, President of Church; Donald Harris, West Stake President; Dennis Berry, Second Counselor; James Barker, Executive Secretary*



*Front row, L to R: Lake City, Florida Stake President, Z. Vincent Smallwood, Former East Stake President Harry A. Yeargin, Alice Yeargin, LaViece Smallwood, Judy (Tommy) McRae*



the West Stake Conference which was scheduled for January 19, 1997, exactly 50 years to the day from the creation of the original Florida Stake on January 19, 1947.

By letter, dated August 8, 1996, Lowell R. Hardy, Secretary to President Hinckley, wrote the Stake Presidency acknowledging receipt of the letter and indicating the willingness of President Hinckley to participate in the Conference.

The Conference, to be our 163rd, also coincided with the Stake being the 163rd Stake in the Church, in addition to being the first stake in the South and the 4th Stake East of the Mississippi River. The West Stake Presidency realized the momentous job which lay ahead in preparation for the Conference. It was determined that other leaders and Church members from the now five additional stakes created from the original Florida Stake be invited.

The Stake Conference was held after many hours of preparation by many dedicated people and was a tremendous spiritual experience. The Choir for the conference under the direction of Sister Leneta Hill with Sister Joleen Brimhall at the organ, both of the West Stake, and members of the Choir from the Jacksonville area stakes, was superb. Elder Russell M. Nelson, member of the Quorum of the Twelve, stated during his conference address, 'I do not know when I have ever heard a better choir.'

We are grateful to the 5000 Saints who braved the cold weather and nipping rain to be in attendance with the Spirit that they possessed. A quiet reverence was observed throughout both the morning and afternoon sessions of Conference as the thousands of people in attendance slipped in and out of the building and parking lot in spiritual harmony.

In our lifetime, this will always remain a unique event and opportunity that will be cherished and remembered forever.



*Church President Gordon B. Hinckley and book author, LaViece Smallwood*



*Present and former Stake Presidents pose with Church President at luncheon during 50th Anniversary conference of the organization of the first Stake in the south, Florida Stake. L to R: Chester Tillman, former Pres. Gainesville Stake; Robert C. Moody, former Pres. Jacksonville West Stake; Robert E. Bone, former Pres. of Jacksonville East and North Stakes; Vernie K. Corb, former Pres. Gainesville Stake; Douglas Dean Gilbert, President Douglas, GA Stake; Ovid O'Neal, former Pres. Douglas, GA Stake; James E. Hill, former Pres. Jacksonville West Stake; Henry V. Jenks, former Pres. Florida Stake; Russell M. Nelson, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Gordon B. Hinckley, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Harry A. Yeargin, former Pres. Jacksonville East Stake; Roswald Mancil, former Pres. Douglas, GA Stake; L. Blaine Vorwalter, former Pres. Jacksonville East Stake; Earnest Peacock, former Pres. Lake City Stake; Nelson D. Harris, President Jacksonville West Stake; Joel Warner, President Jacksonville East Stake; Richard Padgett, President Jacksonville North Stake; Z. Vincent Smallwood, President Lake City, FL Stake; William O. Copeland, former Pres. Jacksonville West Stake.*





Missionary Conference photo at Sanderson, Jan 1-3, 1898

Middle row, center, man in light coat with bow tie and full beard is Apostle Francis M. Lyman;  
man in dark coat to his left is apostle Matthias Cowley; to apostle Cowley's left is apostle Elias Kimball.











